

UTNE INDEPENDENT PRESS NOMINEE: BEST ARTS & CREATIVITY COVERAGE 2005

punk planet

notes from underground

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ROE vs. WADE NOW: THE STATE OF CHOICE | SATURDAY LOOKS GOOD TO ME | CURL UP AND DIE | AMY GOODMAN

ME AND
YOU AND

Miranda

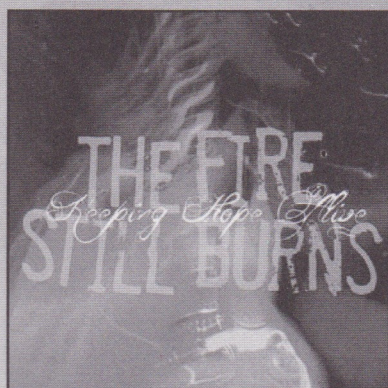
July

AFTER A SURPRISE
HIT MOVIE, PUNK ARTIST
MIRANDA JULY DISCOVERS
THAT NOT EVERYONE
WANTS A HOLLYWOOD ENDING.



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BLACKOUT!



THE FIRE STILL BURNS
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BLAST**



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 Like Blondie with blastbeats!
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deathwish



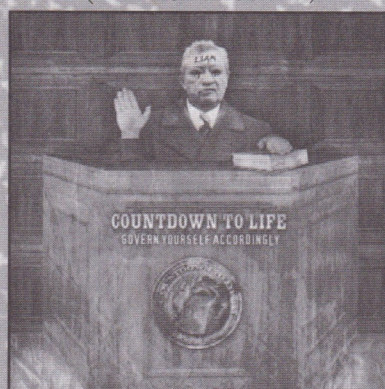
CONVERGE
 "Petitioning Forever"
 DWIO47 2xLP

deathwish

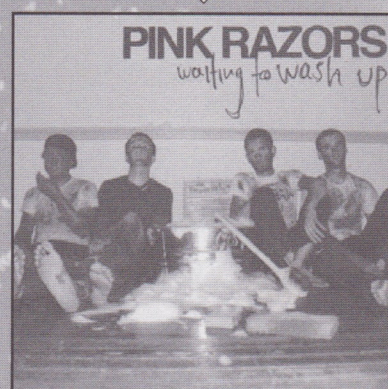


BLACKLISTED
 "...The Beat Goes On"
 DWIO48 CD

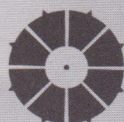
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 "Govern Yourself
 Accordingly"
 NWA045 CD



PINK RAZORS
 "Waiting To Wash Up"
 ROB057 CD



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PP 71

"CURRENT POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE THREATS CERTAINLY GIVE RISE TO UNDERGROUND GROUPS. WOMEN WILL ALWAYS SEEK ABORTIONS, AND THERE WILL ALWAYS BE OTHER WOMEN TO HELP THEM." —FROM "STATE OF DENIAL"

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Planet

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music, zine, comics &
book reviews fleet

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call for pricing/availabiltiy on inside front & back covers.

Ads are due February 27 for PP73

Ads not reserved will get in, but you have no say as to what issue. Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue. Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

intro71

Sometimes you just don't know what's lurking behind the next corner. It could be fame and fortune; it could be pain and sacrifice. Oftentimes, it looks like one if these but turns out to be the other. Or sometimes it's just everything all at once.

It's hard to know what Miranda July was expecting as she turned the corner that led her to her film *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, but what came after—awards at Sundance and Cannes, critics like Roger Ebert singing her praises—she couldn't have anticipated. And what came after all that—the realization that making a movie like this wasn't how she wanted to create her art—couldn't have been foreseen by anyone.

July's story is fascinating. It's the story of venturing into the promised land, only to realize the place you left felt more like home. It's also the story of a woman happy to choose the more difficult route of DIY art making rather than compromise her vision. And in that respect, it's one of the most inspiring stories I've heard all year.

Inspiration runs rampant through this issue. From the creative processes of the bands featured to the individual stories of folks like Walter Shreifels, Amy Goodman, Luc Sante, and Matt Fagan, the interviews in PP71 offer up a diverse and invigorating look at the underground today. Inspiration comes from the

articles in this issue as well, which are anchored by a meticulously researched look at the current state of abortion rights here in the US. It's a long story that paints a frustrating picture—but remember that from frustration often comes action and change.

Inspiration—and frustration—have been high the minds of everyone here at *Punk Planet* as of late. In late October we received a letter from our main distributor informing us that they were having cash flow problems and that our payment—along with the payments of many other great independent magazines—would be delayed for an undisclosed amount of time. The letter couldn't have come at a worse time, as we'd amassed a good amount of debt this year and we were expecting those payments to pay it off.

The situation was dire and so we did the only thing that made sense: we turned to you and asked for your help. Your response was incredible and I'm glad to announce that our debt load was slashed considerably in just a couple weeks. The outpouring of support from our readers, advertisers, and others in the underground was truly the definition of "inspiration."

Thank you,

DAN

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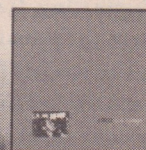
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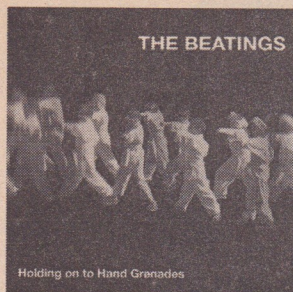
"A reminder that in the right hands the most familiar things in
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MDRF002

THE BEATINGS: 6 Hz (CD EP)

Self-released 2001; re-released 2002 on The Beatings' own Midriff Records. Five tracks by a band trying to kick your ass as quickly as possible. "These guys (and girl) fucking rock!" — Village Voice

MDRF003

THE BEATINGS: The Heart, the Product, the Machine and the Asshole (CD EP)

A dark, noise-rock take on Americana. "Those of us with Bostalgia can't help but hear The Beatings and recall the days when female bass players roamed every stage, when J Mascis was the man to plunder and when the road to glory ran through Fort Apache." — Magnet

MDRF004

THE AUTUMN RHYTHM: Secret Songs (CD Full length)

Dream-pop lullabies and atmospheric guitar work. "The rainy-day reverb and simple melodies drip with the dark charm of Felt or the slow-burn pathos of Rats." — Magnet

MDRF005

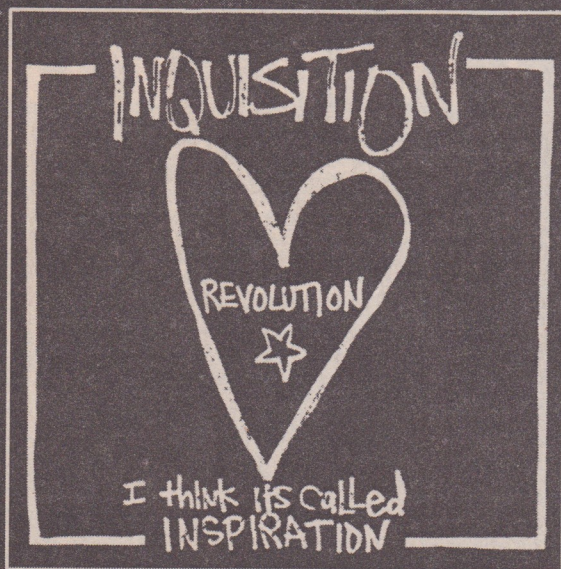
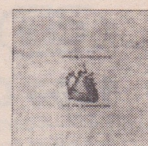
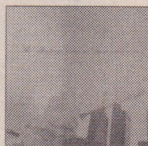
THE BEATINGS: If Not Now, Then When? (CD EP)

The introduction and companion piece to the new full-length by The Beatings, featuring all new tracks. Produced by Paul Q. Kolderie, Tim Shea, and The Beatings. "Dreamy melodies, soaring guitar work, art-rock perfection." — Northeast Performer

MDRF006

PENDING DISAPPOINTMENT: Off the Starboard Bow (CD Full length)

Intense post-punk from Boston. Belligerent and cynical. Timeless.



INQUISITION

"Revolution... I think its called Inspiration" (featuring members of Strike Anywhere, Ann Beretta, and River City High)

A band like Inquisition made a dent in the underground punk community in their heyday, when they should have been a full blown car crash. —Tim Barry (AVAIL)

Very few things will leave as lasting an impression on me as the first chord of the first song I heard by them. —Jason Black (HOT WATER MUSIC)

Inquisition had it all, the energy, the desperation, political lyrics, it was all there and it got me so psyched. —Tim (ENSIGN)

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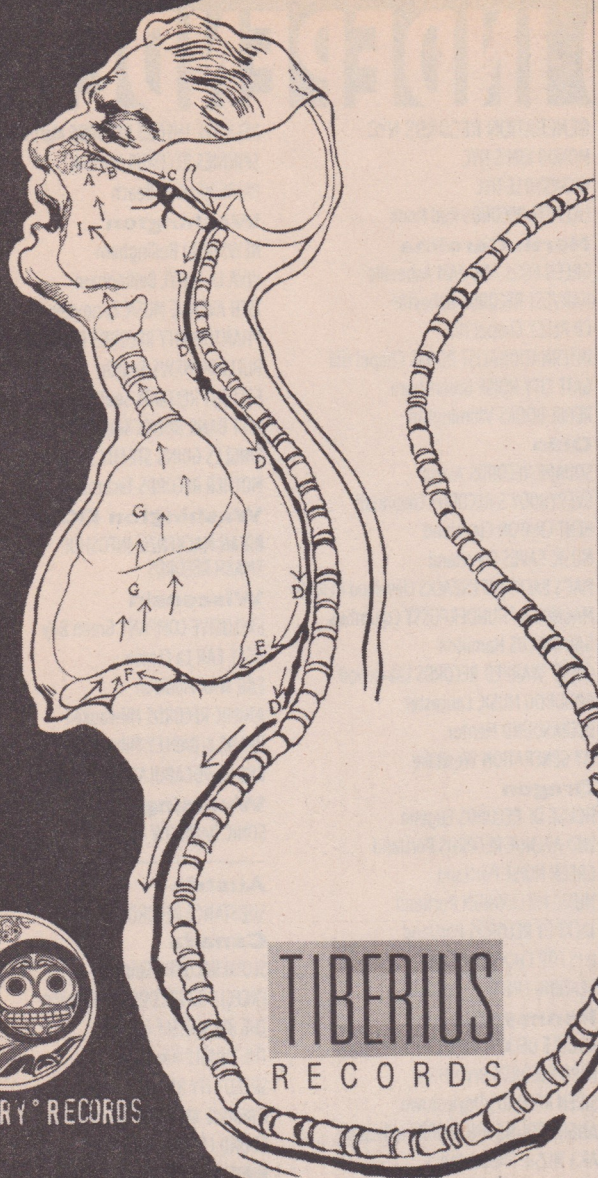


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mail71

"TAKE WHAT CORPORATIONS ARE FREELY GIVING"

►Dear Punk Planet,

I read with interest your cover story in PP70 about corporate marketing tactics ["Black Market"]. While I felt like much of that air of corporate marketing really sucks, at the same time, we (the underground) would be idiots in many ways to pass it up. We've been taking money from the corporate world and in some cases supporting them for a few decades now, whether it's directly (as with some of the artists in your piece) or indirectly (every indie kid who wears Nike-owned Converse). Even Ian MacKaye was pimping Coca Cola for quite a few years back in the early '80s: what could be a bigger corporate endorsement than the hundreds of thousands of images of MacKaye and co. holding bottles of Coca Cola in various pictures?

I personally think we can

second guess ourselves forever, or we can "sell out" if you want to call it that and take what corporations are freely giving. The people who are smart enough already know that the marketing of many of these companies is bullshit and the people who fall for it obviously don't have a clue what being punk is about anyway. In some regards it all seems rather silly, but then again, welcome to the changing face of punk. It looks like it hasn't really changed much at all.

The thing that got me the most about all this was after seeing the cover and reading Dan's comments in the intro, the next page had ads for Victory Records. Aren't they partially owned, distributed, or at least marketed by a major label? Doesn't some of that major label money go into Victory Records, which then goes into zines like Punk Planet for ads?

Kurt Morris

REVIEWS REDESIGN

►Punk Planet,

Boo to the new reviews section. Without intending any offense to those writing articles and columns for the magazine, the primary reason I subscribe is for the "500 tiny reviews every issue." Your reviews section has previously turned me onto countless bands and albums I otherwise wouldn't have encountered. The reduced size of the section can only mean that bands I might totally dig will be overlooked and not included. Not cool at all.

A disgruntled subscriber,
Josh

PP responds: The number of reviews we offer hasn't changed, we've just moved some of them online so we can A) allow more people to read them—for free—and B) cut back on printing costs of the magazine. Additionally, moving some of our reviews online allows us to dedicate more

space to really standout releases in the magazine, and opens up the possibility of creating a searchable reviews database on the Internet.

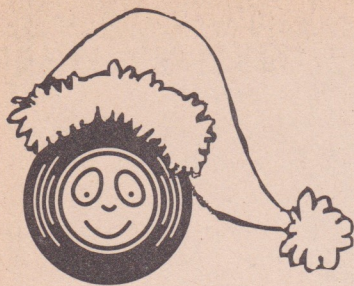
THE REBIRTH OF ANALOGUE

►PP—,

Quantegy is back in business (see Static, PP69 "The End of Analogue")! I have been in contact with their Canadian distributor, the Tape House Media Supply, and they are shipping again. Not all widths and reel sizes are available at the moment but most should be available in a few weeks. If you are in Canada you can contact them at 604-444-4502. I'm not sure about a US distributor, but in the past Quantegy handled their own distro. Hooray analogue!!

Scott Terry
Ottawa, Canada

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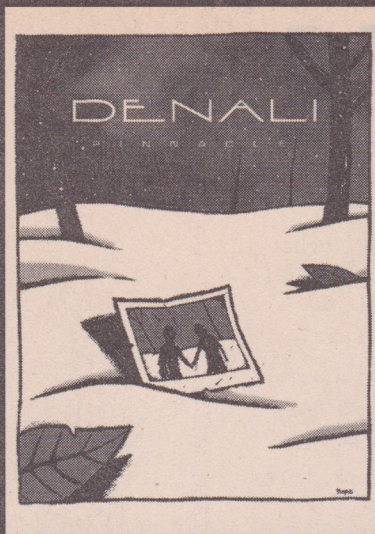
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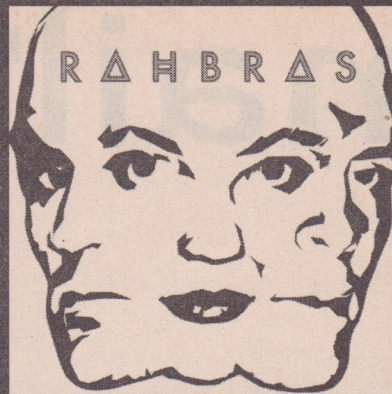
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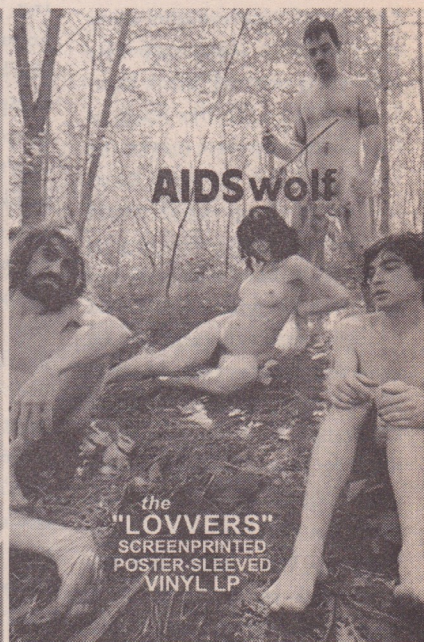
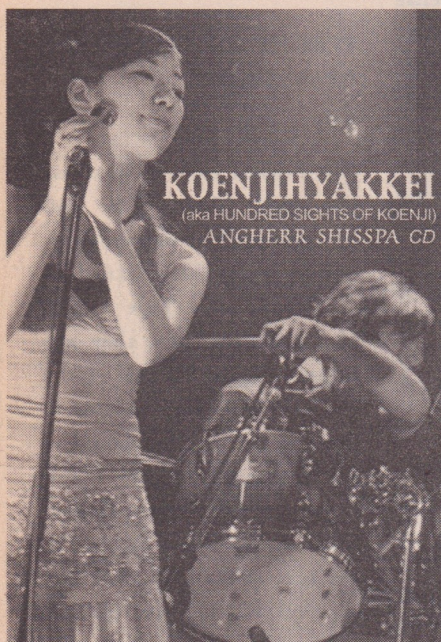
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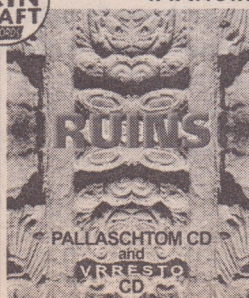
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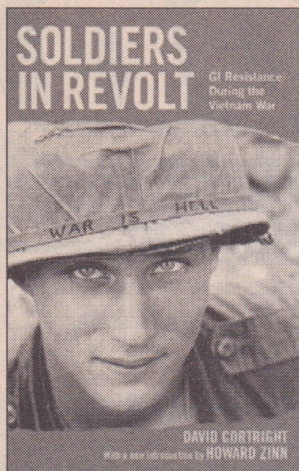
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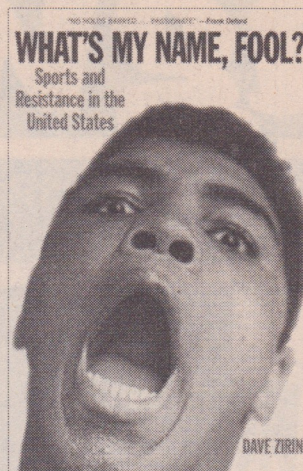
Noam Chomsky

(SEPTEMBER \$16)

"This remarkable book reminds us, as the war in Iraq continues, that a point can be reached where men and women in uniform can no longer tolerate what they begin to see as an unjust war... once they have divested themselves of the deceptions, the nationalism, and the racism that is provoked by war."

Howard Zinn, from the Introduction BY DAVID CORTRIGHT

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"I am a baseball fan, and I love this book. It is so refreshing to have a sports-writer who writes with verve and intelligence, who also has a social conscience, and who refuses to keep those parts of his life separate. This is something I have been looking for, a sports history that understands how the issues of race and class are inextricable from the world of sports."

Howard Zinn

(JULY \$15)

"This book beautifully and brilliantly makes the connection between sports, politics, and resistance."

Chuck D.

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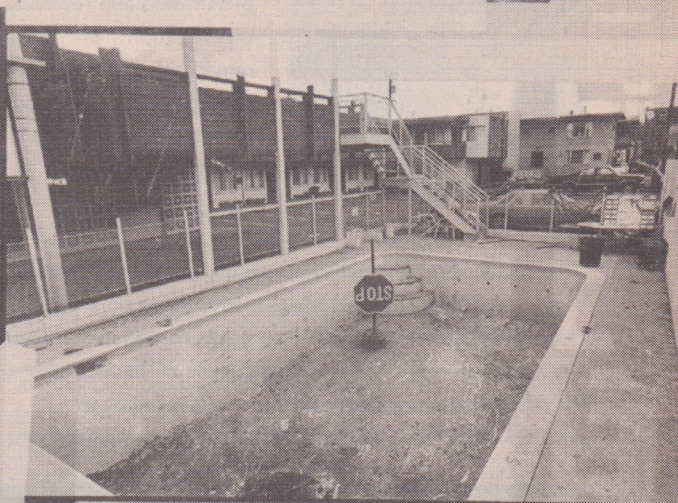
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SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

"For punk to be sustainable the prices need to go up."

RIISING GAS PRICES AND AN ECONOMIC RECESSION CAUSE SOME TO QUESTION THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF PUNK ROCK

Touring has always been a financial risk for a band. Not only do members lose whatever their potential income from playing shows at home—or working day jobs—may be, but they must also take into account their costs on the road. With the current rise in gas prices and the slowly creeping monster that is inflation, the monetary toll has become even heavier than usual. Yet it seems not much can be done about this due to punk rock's tradition of remaining affordable. From Dischord's "Pay no more than \$10 for this CD" stamps to Plan-It-X Records slogan, "If it ain't cheap, it ain't punk," the underground has always been about affordability over profit, an ideal that has resulted in static prices.

"For punk to be sustainable the prices need to go up," says Fen Hoffman, bassist of Cleveland punk act Karate for

Kids. "In 1982, a 7" cost \$3, and now it still costs \$3. Twenty-five years have passed and the cost of living has gone up, but the punk community would consider it blasphemy to charge more for a 7". There needs to be a shift away from the mentality that punk has to be cheap. I'm not saying bands should be making huge profits, just that if people aren't able to monetarily create and sustain this music, it will die."

"Punk rock's message is one of being frugal and not consuming wildly," says Marco Reosti, owner of Salinas Records in Michigan. "That's important, but who's to say \$8 to see touring bands, or \$4-5 for a 7" is not reasonable when you take into account the costs involved. It's easier for me as a label to not raise prices because I don't have the immediate costs of gas and food, but bands need that money."

Still, not everyone in the

punk community thinks there is a problem with the current rates for shows and merchandise. There are bands that can successfully tour on the basement circuit without upping the costs.

"On our last tour, we didn't raise our prices at all and we came home with more money than when we left," says Carly Commando of Long Island indie band Slingshot Dakota. "I understand that if prices go up, it goes to the band and not some upper hand, but the punk community has that mentality that their music, art, and attitude should be resisting capitalism and financial norms. They want things cheap so everyone can afford them."

There is already one tactic in place to combat the rising costs that bands on tour must face: the sliding scale. Essentially, the sliding scale can increase a band's income by giving people the option of paying more. A CD on a merch table can be labeled "\$6-\$10" in the hopes that some people will pay the max. The question is, does it work?

"Sliding scales *do* help out,

but it really depends on the generosity of the audience and what they can afford," says Commando. "When a band is touring, sliding scales are great because most audiences know that it's hard to be on the road and they'll throw in some extra money."

But even the sliding scale is not a panacea for punk rock's financial ailments. The lowest rate asked for an item tends to be the break-even point for a band, and many see sliding scales as a way to save money and not as a way to aid a struggling act.

"All too often, I see sliding scales used as a cop out," says Riosti. "Someone will claim that they only have \$2 for a show while carrying in a 12-pack of beer and that is just selfish."

Due to the self-centered thinking of some audience member and the anti-capitalist feelings of others, bands have had to seek other alternatives besides raising costs—alternatives that often come during the planning stages of a tour.

"Show bookers need to be more considerate of touring bands," Commando says, urging an even split between trav-



“There were people kissing passionately in the front row for three songs.”

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE MAKES SUCCESS SEXY AGAIN

As independent music pushes further into the mainstream, with bands increasingly being co-opted for television and movie soundtracks, it's becoming harder to find artists like Animal Collective, the New York and Maryland-based avant-garde pop quartet, who still make it a priority to embrace the DIY spirit. Having topped 2004 year-end lists with *Sung Tongs*, this fall will see the release of their latest record, *Feels*, which is due out on Fat Cat Records in October. This marks Animal Collective's second release on the British independent label, and the first that's going to have to stand up to the hype. Previously, Animal Collective released their own records, most recently through their label, Paw Tracks, which is also the current home of Ariel Pink, Jane, and the Peppermints.

As a band, Animal Collective resists simple classifications. Songs range from quiet traditional pop vocal harmonies to experimental improvisations and noise-punk freakouts. By staying true to themselves, Animal Collective's monickered members—Avey Tare, Deakin, Geologist, and Panda Bear (respectively: Dave Portner, Josh Dibb, Brian Weitz, and Noah Lennox)—are discovering that success doesn't have to mean compromising your beliefs. And, as Deakin told *Punk Planet*, it also doesn't have to mean giving up the romance.

eling bands, as opposed to local acts. “If a show has four touring bands on it they will have to split the money four ways. Bands should also have other things to sell besides their merch so that even if someone didn't like their set they can still buy something. On our last tour I made bracelets and it helped out.”

“I'm not an economist, so I can't tell you what punk rock needs to keep it thriving financially,” says Hoffman, “but I can tell you that we do need a DIY network that takes care of people. We need people who have the knowledge that we have to burn gas to get to the next show and we have to eat, just like anybody else.”

—Matt Whelihan

“He saw ‘no entry’ signs more as an invitation than as a rule.”

THE DEATH OF INFILTRATION ZINEMAKER NINJALICIOUS SHOCKED THE URBAN EXPLORATION COMMUNITY HE HELPED FOUND

No disclaimer.
No warning signs.

No boundaries.

These were the rules, if they can be called that, that Jeff Chapman lived by. Better known as Ninjalicious, the pseudonym under which he pioneered urban exploration through his zine *Infiltration*, Chapman was a highly influential force in the independent community.

He was also very sick. After a long struggle with liver disease and later cancer, the

31-year-old Chapman died on August 23, 2005.

Though his death shocked his hometown of Toronto, Canada, as well as communities across the world, what he accomplished in his short life overshadows much of the sadness.

Chapman first entered the zine scene as a teenager in 1991 when he started publishing his handmade magazine *Yip* under the pseudonym Milky Puppy. His writings were humorous and lived somewhere between the clever and the inane, and

Yip gained a significant following throughout the '90s. As the Internet slowly started to become more popular, Chapman worked to develop the zine community's online presence as the moderator of the now-defunct alt.zines newsgroup.

But it was his love of urban exploration, a term that was actually coined by Chapman, that would make him a leader in such a movement. Ironically, his illness had a hand in inspiring him to turn his curiosity for places unknown into a zine, culture, and lifelong hobby.

It was during a stay at Toronto's St. Michael's hospital in the early '90s that Chapman's tendencies to explore made him see possibilities beyond the construction sites he was known to roam through,

How have things changed since the band has gotten a little bigger?

It's like an unusual new experiment. I mean, honestly, we're presented with the idea of outside sources and industry. For the most part, I think we have resisted it. Whether there are people at the shows we play or our families saying, "You should just be doing that. That's the record. You make a record and then you play it." It does just turn into, like, a corporation. It is about the sale. And the reason we're able to sell those records is the shows, and the reason we're able to play these shows is they're selling the record. I guess up until this past year, no one cared enough to challenge the idea that we weren't doing that.

Does it help to have your own label?

It helps to have had your own label. It helps to have started recording music at 15, and continue to do it to this day. It helps to have started your own record label at 19, trying to get distribution, even if that only means 20 copies on consignment. And I guess because we've always been so DIY in everything that we do, when the opportunity came up for the quote-unquote machine to take over, there's no part of us that says, "We don't understand." ¶ Fat Cat, who's the only "label" label we've ever worked with, said, "We understand it's not always going to be the same band, and the records are not always going to sound the same." They approached us with that and said, "We essentially want to support that." ¶ I talked to writers when nobody gave a fuck. Now, these things come along where people are like "You are getting all this attention. You should be doing

this." It's in our interest to look at all this, and do that without it becoming not real anymore or losing focus about what's important about what we're doing. People that tell you to do CMJ and South by Southwest. But I think it doesn't mean anything for us.

If South by Southwest doesn't mean anything, does being at smaller clubs mean that much more?

We've been DIY our whole time because we started our own label. Just like me getting our stuff on college radios. Essentially that's what still happens. We've been confronted with more opportunities, and we try to understand it and not just reject it. We got e-mails from people in Buffalo saying, "How come you never come to Buffalo?" And it worked. We went and had a really good time. I'd never been there before. Those are the things we try to focus on: individuals. That's why we do it. ¶ It means so much to me when people tell us, like, "I was crying the whole time" or there were people kissing passionately in the front row for three songs. Part of it could implode in six months. If that was the case, it wouldn't stop us doing what we're doing. It would just mean, "Cool nobody cares anymore, but we still do." ¶ I don't feel like we've made any mistakes yet. And a mistake would be those things where we would do that standard "sell your soul" or sacrifice your beliefs. As far as I'm concerned, the moment we stop thinking is the moment that it will die. The spirit of what we do is too much the essential part of what we're doing. —Lee Epstein

Listen to their latest from Paw Tracks: www.paw-tracks.com.

and he passed his time at the hospital exploring the building's deepest intricacies.

To document his explorations and to educate and inform others about urban exploration, Chapman founded *Infiltration* in 1996, under the pseudonym that so many would come to recognize: Ninjalicious. The highly popular, long-running zine (and its companion website) about "places you're not supposed to go" detailed the best entryways and exits of the featured infiltrations, gave a heads-up to potential security problems, and pointed out any locked doors or decaying or dangerous areas of the sites featured. *Infiltration* covered the explorations of Toronto's subway tunnels, the bowels of the posh Royal York Hotel, and the

University of Toronto's underground passageways, to name a few. Often his partner Liz Clayton was in tow, and the two made trips across the border, as well, to infiltrate places like The Buffalo Central Terminal and Rochester, NY's abandoned subway. As *Infiltration's* reputation grew on a worldwide scale it welcomed contributions from other urban explorers, which led to incredible accounts, like the explorations through a missile silo in Roswell, NM, and the underground catacombs of Paris.

With *Infiltration*, Chapman set the rules he hoped others embarked on urban explorations would follow. He didn't believe in putting up disclaimers on the website or print version of the zine because he

didn't think there was anything wrong with what he was doing. Instead, he wrote "please do try this at home," mocking other urban exploration sites that used disclaimers. Though he acknowledged his explorations were trespassing, he saw "no entry" signs more as an invitation than as a rule.

When infiltrating, the urban explorers who followed Chapman's school of thought didn't vandalize, steal, or litter, and only took photos to document what they found. One thing that Chapman worked to accomplish with *Infiltration* was to create an appreciation for the concrete landscape that surrounds many of us. For Chapman, urban exploration was a way to break out of oblivion and escape the conditioned

mold that keeps us afraid of what we don't know.

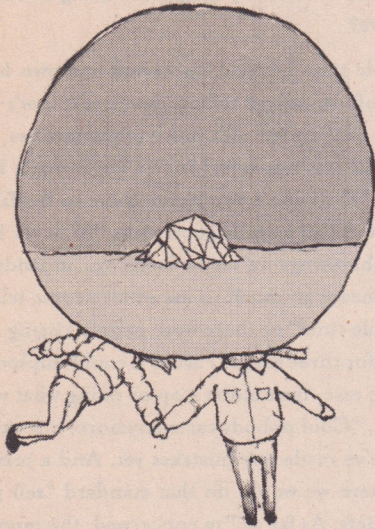
As *Infiltration's* popularity increased, the urban exploration movement strengthened and reached to all corners of the world. A language even started to evolve out of urban exploration, and so Chapman created an *Infiltration* dictionary for the online version of the publication.

About a year ago, doctors discovered cancer had developed in Chapman's bile ducts. In the eight months after his diagnosis, he married Liz Clayton, saw his book *Access All Areas* go into print, and attended the second international Urban Exploration Convention, which he founded last year.

Today, Toronto has its own urban exploration club, which boasts a staggering 250

Iceberg Town BY JOE MENO AND NICK BUTCHER

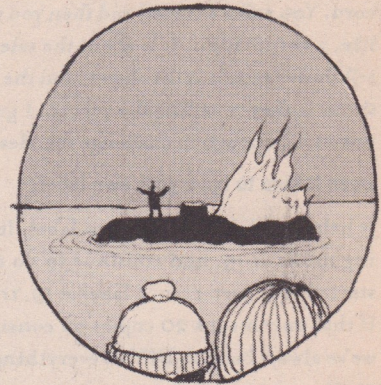
After the sad results of the most recent election, many of us fled north. But the great continent could not bear the immense strain; a unnoticed yet glacier-sized city drifted off into the ocean and the small strange world of Iceberg town was born then.



we had been lost at sea for ten months. We had been forgotten but I had met Elise so I did not mind.



one night while the whole town was making snow angels, a terrible sound erupted from the sea.



It was a very fancy submarine. The submarine was on fire. In a moment a happy-looking fellow with glasses and a pot belly climbed on out, waving at us enthusiastically.

members. There's no way to say how many other urban explorers there are in the city acting outside of this membership. When Chapman's death was announced, the online urban exploration forum was quickly buzzing with comments from

all over North America, Europe and Australia, a testament to how many could be inspired by one man's curiosity, and the best advice he's ever given: please do try this at home.

—Liz Worth

Join the urban exploration discussion: www.uer.ca.

"My first finished song was a present for someone because I was broke."

BENJY FERREE'S UNIQUE DISTRIBUTION PLAN HERALDS THE END OF THE DEMO TAPE AS WE KNOW IT

Benjoy Ferree is going to be famous, one way or another. A musician from Prince Georges County, Maryland, now living in Washington DC, Ferree's songs are strange, startling alt-country pop that comes from a great

tradition of American roots music, music which was most often played at social functions to bring people together. With the help of the internet, that's precisely what Ferree has been doing. Along with a number of other savvy, unsigned

musicians, Benjy has begun distributing songs like "A Little at a Time" and "Leaving the Nest" himself via e-mail to interested listeners, booking agents, and music journalists, forgoing the usual complexities of record labels, record stores, and record distribution companies.

Benjy, how did you record the EP before you started trying to get the songs out there on your own?

It was all done with the help of my friends. My pal, Dennis Kane, recorded the whole thing except for one guitar solo punch-in that my friend Brendan Canty, from Fugazi, recorded. Brendan then mixed the whole record. So I had all of their support.

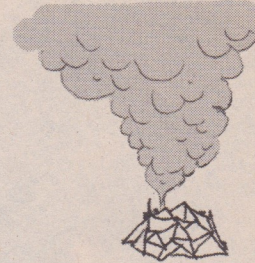
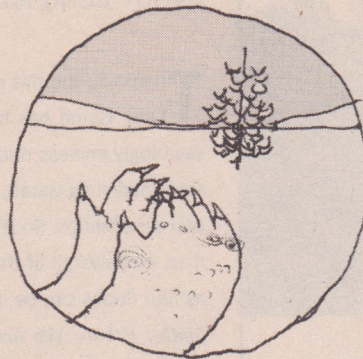
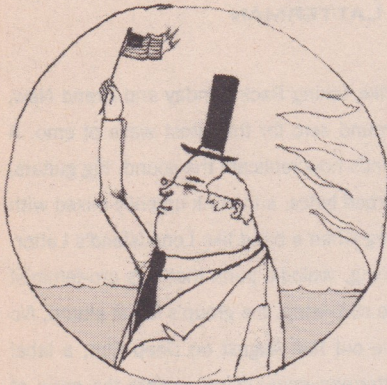
Would you prefer to have people exchanging your music for free or

would you rather get paid through a label or mpeg site?

I like the idea of people exchanging my music for free. I've always given out my music for free anyway. My first finished song was a present for someone because I was broke. I'll be honest, I don't know anything about how artists make any money at all. I mean I would love to stop bartending and be able to just sing full time but I recorded the record for myself and wanted to get it to the audience personally.

Have you attempted to get any label's interested in your music while you share your songs with strangers via e-mail?

My friend, Laris Kreslins from Box Theory Records [and Arthur], offered to help me put it out, just to get it out there.



"I am the President of the United States," he said. "I have come here to hide."

The polar bears began to clap and whistle. Other people began to shout and throw snowballs which seemed a little impolite.

The president pulled out a revolver and began to wave it around. He swore at us. He stole our ice cream truck full of records and drove it through someone's igloo. We really hate the president now.

So I said yes. So it'll be out in October. I guess he wants other labels to hear me and maybe have someone else help me out to do a LP in the future, but they won't get to hear it unless we put it out like this ourselves.

So did you decide to begin using e-mail to distribute your music out of necessity?

Necessity, yes. I only e-mailed songs out to people because my friend made a few mp3s for me so I could try and get this Greenhornes gig at the Black Cat here in DC. I'm happy to tell you I got the gig. For people that are interested in your music, it only takes a few seconds to deliver the package.

—Joe Meno

Listen for yourself at www.benjyferree.com.

"I have heard the American news and have thought, 'Wait a minute, there has to be more to it than this.'"

SURE IT ONLY TRANSMITS TO A FEW COUNTIES IN CALIFORNIA, BUT SIZE DOESN'T STOP DAN ROBERTS'S SHORTWAVE REPORT FROM BROADCASTING INTERNATIONAL NEWS.

From a cabin nestled in Mendocino County, California, Dan Roberts listens to the world. Every week, Roberts compiles stories culled from various shortwave radio sources for rebroadcast on his show, the *Shortwave Report*. This half-hour review of news stories has appeared weekly on KXYX & Z, 88.3, 90.7 and 91.5 FM, serving Mendocino

and surrounding counties, since 1999.

A shortwave aficionado since the 1970s, Roberts's interest in the medium peaked in the 1980s as wars raged in Nicaragua and El Salvador. "I pulled out the shortwave radio and started listening to get other perspectives on what was going on because I knew that our radio wasn't covering

it accurately," he explains. "By that point, Radio Havana Cuba was on full time. Radio Netherlands was on. Germany's Radio Deutsche Welle was on. There was a lot more activity in shortwave."

Roberts retold these stories to friends, who expressed great interest in the alternate viewpoints. Over the years, he kept tabs on developing events and continued to share foreign news with his friends and colleagues at Pacifica-affiliate KZYX. In 1997, Roberts was allotted a 15-minute slot on an international news show to reiterate his news from across the shortwave bandwidth.

"I thought, if you tell a story and then they tell it to somebody else and they tell it to somebody, everything gets kind of watered down and



"Perspective manifests itself in the language."

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: THERE'S NOTHING EMO ABOUT LONG ISLAND'S LATTERMAN

Thanks to the rise of bands like Taking Back Sunday and Brand New, Long Island has become ground zero for the latest wave of emo. A seemingly endless number of bands now replicate the sound: big guitars, screamed/sung vocals, self-absorbed lyrics, and punk urgency mixed with pop sensibilities. So it's refreshing when a band like Long Island's Latterman eschews all of that for bracing, melodic punk that's as pro-feminist as four dudes can be. Even more surprising, the group's latest album, *No Matter Where We Are...!*, came out last August on Deep Elm, a label known mostly for emo. But Latterman enjoy going against the grain at home, on their record label, and on tour. During a stop on their fall tour, bassist/vocalist Matt Cannino, guitarist/vocalist Phil Douglas, and guitarist Mike Campbell talked to *Punk Planet*.

fuzzy, and so I thought that I would start recording the stories and playing them."

Thanks to innovations in home recording equipment, Roberts earned a weekly spot for the *Shortwave Report* two years later. In addition to his Friday night spot at KXYX & Z, the *Shortwave Report* is available on MP3 format through www.outfarpress.com and www.radio4all.net, where it is free to download and rebroadcast. According to Roberts, the show currently airs on over 50 US-licensed radio stations and an unknown amount of unlicensed stations. It also airs on community stations in Canada, Europe, Australia, and parts of Asia.

Roberts uses a professional shortwave radio and a 65-foot external shortwave antenna to monitor stories, which he captures with a minidisc

recorder, for three nights. The news pieces must come from outlets that have authorized a rebroadcast and carry signals strong enough to remain audible after the recording process, which limits Roberts to programs emanating from Voice of Russia, Radio Havana Cuba, Radio Netherlands, China Radio International, and occasional stories from Spanish Foreign Radio out of Madrid. He also has a few guidelines of his own for selecting what appears on his program.

"I like to cover Central and South American because I think it is very important to North Americans and it is not really covered in depth in our corporate news . . . I have heard the American news and have thought, 'Wait a minute, there has to be more to it than this.' I look for stories that tell the same story but from a dif-

ferent perspective or, maybe, with their blinders off." Roberts also looks for news "with more global impact."

Recent shows include a Dutch report on Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's recent meetings with leaders of Caribbean nations, a Cuban perspective on Hurricane Katrina and Russia's take on the UN Security Council's involvement with nuclear development in Iran.

Roberts, a former contributor to shortwave periodical *Monitoring Times*, has some advice for those who wish to explore the medium.

"Understand that it is not going to sound the same as local radio stations. The sound quality is going to be much worse. Try to understand the time differences and that, sometimes, even though a radio station might be broadcast-

ing at 7:00 p.m. at 9845, you might not be able to pick it up." This is because of the unique nature of shortwave radio transmission, wherein the signal essentially bounces up and down between the earth and the ionosphere, which makes it sensitive to atmospheric changes. Common household equipment, such as computers, fluorescent lighting and refrigerators can also cause interference because "they are putting out electromagnetic pulses that are in the same band that the shortwave is in."

Roberts advises against purchasing the cheapest radio model on the market, as "you can get really frustrated unless all you want to listen to is the BBC and Voice of America."

However, he points out that the key to good reception is the antenna. "You can actually

Emo's almost too easy of a target because everyone bashes it.

Cannino: Yeah, you're definitely right. Our record is definitely not necessarily targeting emo; it's kind of targeting all music, specifically punk. Because if you're talking about punk, it's the one place where people should feel comfortable, and people shouldn't have to deal with bullshit.

How does that critique manifest itself at shows?

Cannino: It kind of goes from day to day. We were at this show in Charlotte, and there was this kid, and he was playing in the band after us . . .

Campbell: But before they played, I was sitting behind the merch table, and they all bought CDs. They were like "You guys are awesome! We really like your band!" One kid bought a shirt—and then their band played.

Cannino: [Laughs.] They had this one song where it all of a sudden stopped, and the guy was like "You bitch! Blah blah blah blah." And I was like, "This is fucked up." After the song ended, one of the dudes was like, "Yeah that was our fuck-you-bitch-ex-girlfriend song!" I was in the back—I had a couple beers in me at this point—and I was like, "Fuck you! That's fucked up!" [Laughs.] I started yelling at them, and it ended up turning into this huge argument between us and these kids.

take a pretty crummy shortwave radio and, if you hook it up to a long wire antenna, you will get good reception. You will actually be able to hear it quite well." Or, you could just let Roberts

do the work for you and tune in for the *Shortwave Report*.

—Liz Ohanesian

Find the Shortwave Report or get shortwave radio tips at Dan Roberts's website, www.outfarpress.com/outfarpress/shortwave.shtml.

"We're trying to legitimize hardcore."

TERENCE HANNUM AND MARC FISHER REWRITE HISTORY ONE HARDCORE ALBUM AT A TIME

If I read one more book about hardcore, I might throw up. It's not that these books aren't vital pieces of information about a then-hundreds-of-years-old genre, but right now, how influential DC, Los Angeles, and New York have been to hardcore (and punk rock in general) is still pretty fresh in our minds. After all, punk and hardcore, at their absolute oldest, are 30, which is why the

ongoing Hardcore Histories held in Chicago's experimental cultural center, Mess Hall, are so vital to punk. They're in the here and now, live, and reach out to sub-genres of hardcore that aren't always touched on in the aforementioned volumes.

A series of ongoing events organized by Terence Hannum and Marc Fisher, Hardcore Histories started inofficiously: "We spent some

Campbell: Then they asked for their money back for their CDs.

Cannino: They were like, "You guys didn't give us a chance! This is about the music!" And I was like, "This is kind of about the music, but it's kind of about something else. It's about more than that, and I don't think you guys are getting it."

Campbell: They were saying punk rock was offensive by nature because of the way it sounded. [Laughs.]

Cannino: We were like, "No, you guys are making it that way by using language that makes an unsafe atmosphere and a violent atmosphere." Stuff like that happens from time to time.

Heartbreak inspires everyone. Is it just using specific language that crosses the line, or is it more of a perspective?

Cannino: It's definitely more of a perspective that makes it threatening. That perspective manifests itself in the language . . . More of a problem, getting deeper into things, is the attitude that comes behind that word and the feelings that come behind that word. Like you said, heartbreak, that's a good thing to write a song about. Everyone gets their heart broken, but there's just a way to do it that doesn't have to be violent and doesn't have to be completely reactionary like so many bands have been doing for years and years and years. —Kyle Ryan

Find out more online at www.lattermanband.com.

time in Marc's apartment eating falafel and trading time on the record player with records we thought were important to us," says Hannum. "Then we started laying out ideas for events."

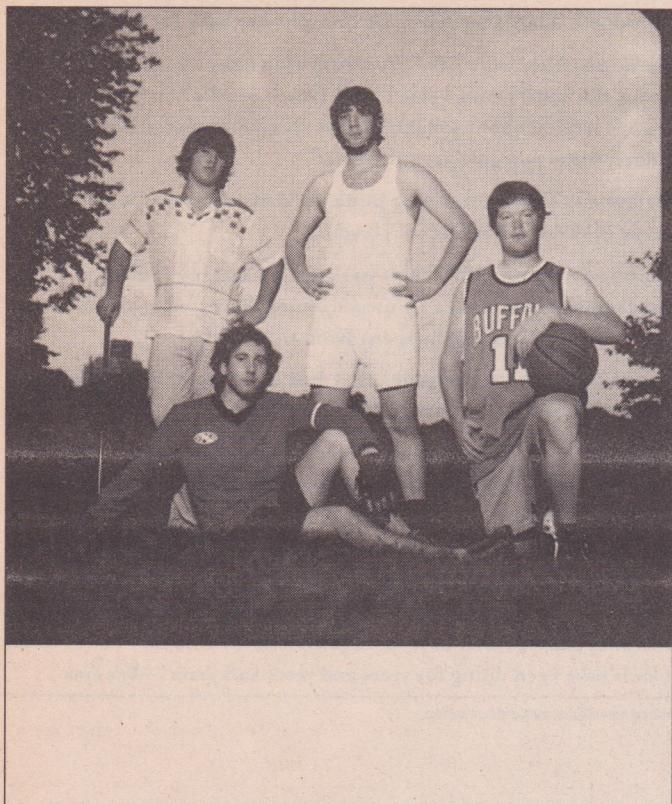
Over the past few months, such events have included a night based strictly on the importance of the 7", an all-Italian hardcore night with pasta, and "Queercore for the Queer corps," a night devoted to gays and lesbians in hardcore. Flyers are distributed, people tell their friends, and anywhere from five to 50 people have shown up to play and discuss important records.

But, what's the point? For hipsters to show off their dense record collections? Hardly. Hannum continues, "We're advocates [of this music] because it affected our lives and set out a lot about who we are and how

we operate as artists and political individuals . . . Finding people who have experienced a similar impact, and how that impact goes against what the majority of what parades itself as hardcore these days, whether in music or politics, is interesting and important."

Looking back at the good old days of hardcore is all well and good, but the Hardcore Histories, because of their interactive nature, stress enjoying punk *right now*.

"For me," Hannum says, "those scrawled liner notes, mumbled statements between songs, brave tour-goers, DIY spaces, and heady labels all made me think at an important part of my life about how to do something on your own, how to think for yourself, how to work with others to achieve a common goal, how to help people, and how to be a creative agent in



"We didn't let them tell any of their friends. We didn't want it to be weird."

THE SUBJECTS' UNIQUE BLEND OF ACADEMICS AND ROCK MIGHT JUST MAKE YOU HOT FOR TEACHER.

The Subjects, a New York City four-piece, have hit upon a straight-A combination of deranged guerilla marketing practices, energizing live performances, and a schtick rooted in the bands' unusual origins. A raw, two-track EP—an early recording—helped a little too: "Joe was drunk one night and putting it under windshield wipers of cars [in Manhattan]," says lead singer and bassist David Sheinkopf on the Subjects' initial attempts to attract press attention.

Although such antics are not atypical of fanatical musicians, they might be atypical of high-school teachers. At the outset of the band, two members were educators and the other two were their students. Sheinkopf and guitarist Joe Smith taught young guitarist Jimmy Carvonetti and drummer Matthew Iwanusa through 11th and 12th grades at Churchill School & Center in Manhattan.

There are other teacher/student rock bands out there, but what makes the Subjects truly worthy of gold stars is the quality of their music. Their unique brand of danceable, crooning power pop rock is

a community yet not lose your autonomy."

The actual histories of hardcore are well-suited for texts that can be read years down the road, but these events are celebrations for those of us who enjoy the subtleties of hardcore and can realize (and discuss) how it's affected us. There's only a small group of people that can relate to buying your first 7" or going to your first basement show, and the Hardcore Histories is a place to find like-minded individuals. All events are free, all food (like at the upcoming Swedish hardcore / meatball and Japanese hardcore / sushi nights) is free, and each event is advertised by freely distributed, double-sided 11 x 17" poster, which Hannum calls the "liner notes" to any given presentation.

Though hardcore often gets passed off as a phase kids go through—a temporary rebellion—Hannum has bigger ideas for those still interested past their teens. "I guess we're trying to le-

gitimize hardcore too, figure out its trajectory, expound its methods, cross some generations, and overall—enjoy it." —*Dave Hofer*

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"To tell you the truth, it's all just a business to us."

CHICAGO'S HE WHO CORRUPTS IS A HARDCORE BAND WITH A BUSINESS PLAN

Meat Ryan Durkin. Singer. Label-owner. Businessman. Durkin is the head honcho at Hewhocorrupts, Inc. (HWC, Inc.) a hardcore label out of Elmhurst, Illinois that has released such notorious hardcore bands as Tusk, John Brown Battery, Not Enough Gold, and Durkin's own He Who Corrupts.

Durkin's band steps up to the plate with a furious attack of light-

ning-speed tracks about the corporate world. They inject the perfect amount of humor into a scene not conventionally infused with comedy.

He Who Corrupts is a spit in the face to every standard, all-too-serious hardcore band. With Durkin's irate screams, He Who Corrupts leads the listener to the point of no return; the point where business, hardcore, and half-naked live shows merge.

What came first, the label or the band?

I'm not really sure. To tell you the truth it's all just a business to us. It doesn't really matter if people think we're an entertainment group or even a thespian league. Our main focus is reincarnation ala Madonna so we can meet yearly revenue benchmarks.

The label seems to play an integral part in the Chicago hardcore scene. How and when did you guys get involved?

We got involved after I looked at some numbers in our 1997 "Chicago's on Fire" report created by our highly acclaimed strategic marketing department. I noticed that Los Crudos and Charles Bronson sales were showing awe-inspiring growth in the international markets. Therefore I com-

unassuming and intoxicating. While it may fit into the same genre as Franz Ferdinand and Bloc Party, its style is uniquely American.

Jimmy Carvonetti and Matt Iwanusa weave the instrumental fabric at the core of the Subjects' sound with amazing prowess. Their hopping guitar hooks and boot shuffling tempo fade and sway to Sheinkopf's pining lyrics. He sings, yells, and pleads in abstract blue honesty. In "Hounds of War"—one of four tracks available for download from their website—Sheinkopf sings, "Living leaves on falling trees / softly cradled in my arms / all these dreams roll on like ships, meant to ferry us past harm." Sung subtly, words blend with bebop, and the Subjects elevate rock to poetry.

Smith's contribution to the band is not as prevalent in recordings as it is at live performances. Adorned in a shoulder-draped sweater, looking like a brawny Ivy Leaguer, and playing guitar with a maniacal grin, he represents the Cheshire cat character of the Subjects. One can't help but wonder as they play: Are they happy? Drunk? Crazy? Perverse? Dangerous? The answer is, of course: all of the above.

At approximately 5'7", with a kind of James Spader *savoir faire*, Sheinkopf exhibits youthful zeal. Conversely Carvonetti and Iwanusa have the presence of hardened rock veterans. On stage they meet in the middle; the band gels, the sound struts, and everything else is irrelevant. The band's chemistry is an extension of their friendship, which formed during after-school projects in Sheinkopf's video production class. One such project was a Chris-

topher Guest-like mockumentary featuring two student characters (played by Carvonetti and Iwanusa) who want to drop out of school and become karaoke stars. They first started playing music together to score the video project. The musical chemistry led to endless after school rehearsals and a few recordings.

So, how did these nefarious types get away with forming their teacher/student band? Simply put, the school's administration had no idea what was going on. "We didn't let them tell any of their friends. We didn't want it to be weird. We didn't tell any of the other teachers," says Sheinkopf.

During Carvonetti and Iwanusa's senior year, teacher Sheinkopf sent their CD to a few venues and the band was offered gigs. Smith and Sheinkopf approached the kids' parents first. "We didn't want the parents to be the 'bad guys' if they said no," explains Sheinkopf. Fortunately, the parents agreed right away.

The Subjects are busy establishing themselves as a force to reckon with in the New York City rock scene. Unfortunately, their new material can only be heard at their local performances. They're rehearsing and expanding their audio arsenal in preparation for their first full length album. As for the creative direction of the new album, Sheinkopf would like to see their music become more "psychedelic." With a straight face he adds, "We're thinking about encouraging the kids to take LSD." —John Simone

Study up: www.gosubjectsgo.com.

prised a new division to choke down available market share. The rest is history.

Tell me about the song "Master of Profits."

It's really a promotional product in disguise. "Master of Profits" spawned off of a 1998 recall of our infamous "It's Only Money" firework product line. We incorporated—no pun intended—a subliminal message in the song telling all consumers who purchased the product not to return it or we'd have someone come to their house and drop a fucking bus on their head. So far it seems like our message has been received successfully.

When I first heard about He Who Corrupts, I thought you guys were a "joke band," but I quickly realized that you guys fucking rule.

What sort of audience response do you get at shows?

Some audience members respond with confusion. But let's face it, when you look at the demographics of our core audience you are dealing with 14 to 22 year olds, many in high school or lacking a GED. So can I really blame them if they don't know what positive cash flow is? Other audience members respond by purchasing our product. We are desperately trying to grow this portion of our audience.

I've been to one show, and it resulted in half the band pretty much naked. Have shenanigans like that gotten you fellows into any trouble with clubs?

Part of selling a great product is making sure you have a superior package for it. Some people

do not understand this. But we feel that our packaging will only continue to differentiate ourselves in the marketplace. There have been some distributors who have shown disgust for our packaging. However, I'm sure our investors will be pleased to know that we have responded to their complaints and have trimmed back our packaging.

I know you guys recently did a tour of Germany. What was the reaction there?

Initially they were scared. They had heard about our sizable market share and how some of us manage very impressive portfolios. But after we were able to secure trade agreements and promised significant investments to their large squat communities they warmed up to us. Vice Chairman Rory Lockheart

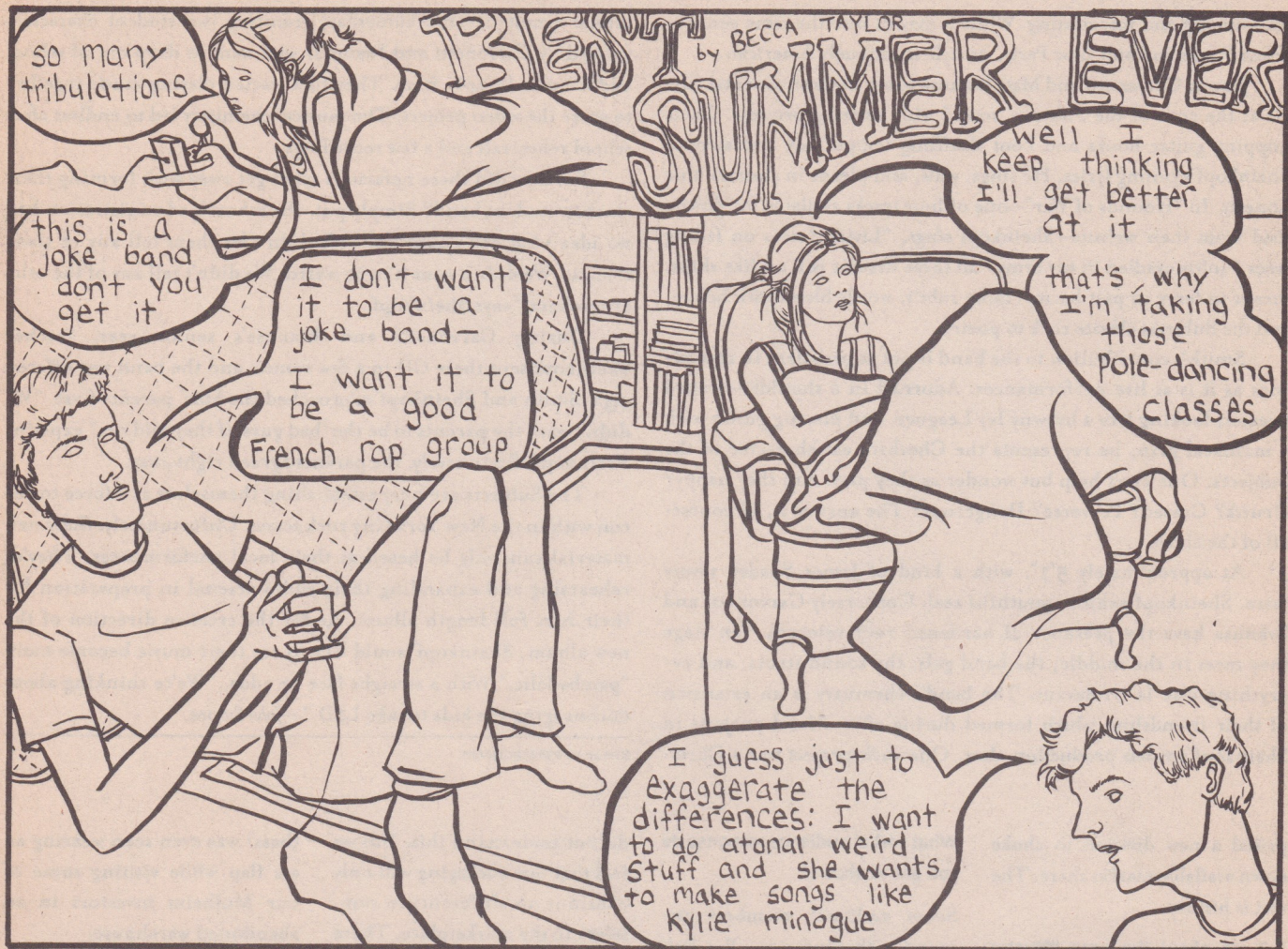
(bass) was even seen wearing an ass flap while visiting some of our Mulheim investors in an abandoned warehouse.

Describe your slogan for me.

"This is a business not a social club" was coined after I found some employees of HWC Inc. talking about what they were going to do over the weekend. They are no longer with the company. Needless to say, the phrase stuck and I'm proud to say that my staff only talks about Interpunk sales and Purevolume web hits when I'm around.

What new innovations are you developing?

Investors should see a strategic repositioning of our offering late next quarter when we plan to incorporate a touring merch table while we are not on tour.



The Pie Report

The table will come equipped with a credit card machine and integrated voice response capabilities to further reduce staffing expenses. We have the good folks in HWC Inc. R&D to thank for this fine engineering milestone.

One last question: How do you play so damn fast?

I believe the real question is *why* do you play so damn fast. The answer is quite simple: If we played any slower we would have less time to concentrate on our profit margin. —Mike "The Intern" Barron

Potential investors can find out more at www.hewhocorrupts.com.

Living in Indiana I have developed an interest in—nay, a passion—for inexplicable nicknames (for example: "Hoosiers"). The origin of name "Osgood Pie", much like the origin of the term "Hoosiers," is hotly debated, and there seems to be no consensus among pie historians or aficionados. Some say it's short for "oh-so-good" or "all's good" pie, some say it's the name of the cook who invented this pie. Some say the name is derived from the place of origin, the Ozarks. Anyway, and Osgood pie is a chess pie with raisins (lesson on the origins of the name "chess pie" at a later date). It's good. All good. Oh so good. Make one... even if you can't explain it.

Osgood Pie

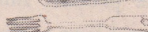
1/2 C. butter
2 C. sugar
4 eggs, separated
2 C chopped pecans
1 C raisins
9" pie shell

Cream butter and sugar. Add yolks, beaten until thick, nuts and raisins. Beat egg whites until stiff. Fold whites into yolk/nut/sugar mixture. Spoon into pie shell and bake @ 350 °F for -45 min.

—Sue Anne Zollinger www.pieofthemonth.org



OH-SO-GOOD!



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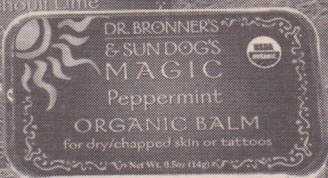
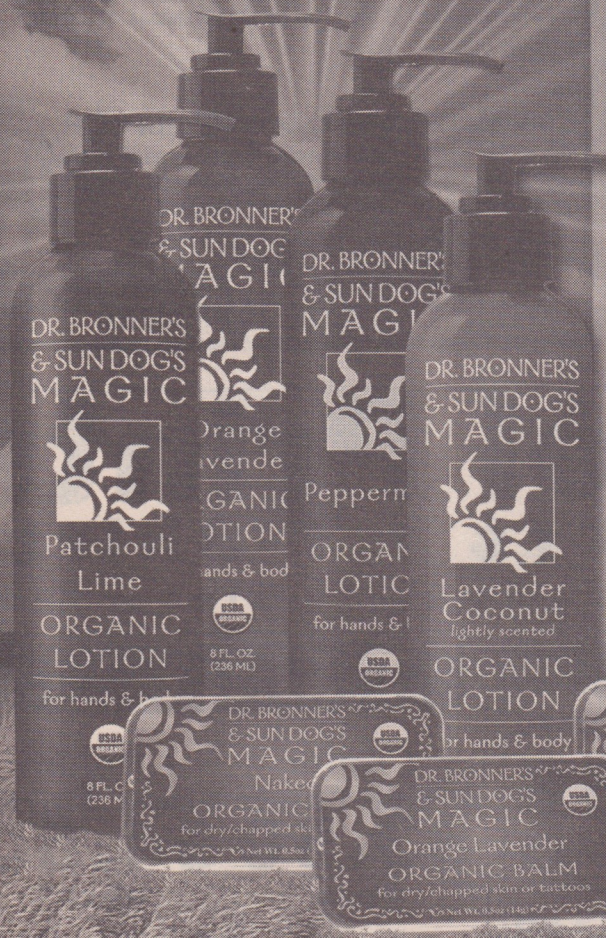
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tslos4

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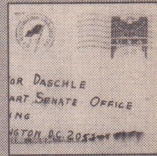
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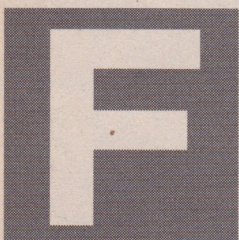
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airy tales are funny things. We've been raised on them—we've come to expect their Prince Charmings, their three wishes, their happily-ever-afters. And so we wait for the magic beans, for the golden goose, for the wolf to be bested. We wait. And our lives pass us by, waiting. Forever.

Miranda July stopped waiting a long time ago. She made her own movies, she made her own art, she toured performance pieces as if they were a band, she climbed a beanstalk of her own making. And then a funny thing happened: the fairy tale came true.

In 2001, July wrote a draft of a feature-film screenplay. It was different than anything she'd done before—less experimental, more narrative—and she was coaxed into submitting it to the Sundance Institute, the venerable independent film incubator founded by Robert Redford, for their Screenwriters' Lab workshop. Turned down, July submitted revised drafts of her script two more times, finally being accepted in 2003.

Working on the script in a workshop setting was a new experience, for July, who traditionally made her artwork alone, sharing it only when completed. It was the first of many new experiences that would follow, as the Screenwriters' Lab led to the Directors' Lab, which led to meeting film producer Gina Kwon. The two hit it off, and suddenly July found herself looking for financing to make her feature-film debut.

The rest of this tale is told in dozens of newspaper stories, magazine articles, and web features—and because this is a fairy tale, you can probably guess how it ends: The film gets made; the film goes to the Sundance Film Festival where it wins a juried award for original vision; the film then goes to the Cannes Film Festival in France and wins the Camera d'Or prize there; the film gets rave reviews from every major reviewer; the film gains instant cult status on the art house circuit; July is praised as the "new voice of American cinema"; and—say it with me now—they all live happily ever after.

Except for one thing: The fairy tales you've been told your whole life aren't true. The real fairy tales—the ones written hundreds of years before folks like Walt Disney cleaned them up—are bloody affairs. They're scary

and they're uncomfortable and while they might end happily, someone's usually lost something—often a limb, it seems—along the way.

While everything that's been written about July and her wonderfully surprising film, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, is true—she did win the Camera d'Or (it's gold and heavy, she says), she did become an overnight critic's darling, she did garner praise and wonder and everything else—it's what hasn't been written yet that truly counts: July, exhausted from a year of promoting the movie—traveling the globe, having her picture taken thousands of times, her words recorded hundreds—is done with it. She longs for smaller projects, for simpler creations. She wants to go back to the "old way" of doing things.

July's "old way" is still pretty good. Forged in the heat of the same '90s Pacific Northwest punk scene that produced Bikini Kill, Sleater-Kinney, K Records, Kill Rock Stars, and too many others to list here, July took the teachings of that fiercely independent scene to heart. Starting with funny experimental videos shot solo in her bedroom—videos where she would play multiple characters having awkward, halting conversations—July went on to record two spoken-word albums for Kill Rock Stars and took her act on tour, playing punk clubs to audiences that had probably never seen performance art before (and probably in more than a few cases, never would again).

As her notoriety began to increase in the underground, people from the art establishment began to take notice, and July began to perform her eccentric, charming pieces at art venues. Meanwhile, her videos—more avant-garde than her earlier work—began to be screened throughout the world. Eventually, July saw her artwork included in the last two Whitney Biennials (which, not to bore you with details, is a Big Deal in the art world). It was enough to start looking for a prince to come galloping in on a winged horse.

But again, July found herself at odds with the happily-ever-after offered by the art establishment. Instead of agreeing to sell limited-edition videos to collectors, she created a free DIY film distribution method for women filmmakers called Joanie 4 Jackie (the project's original title, Big Miss Moviola, was halted by lawyers from the Magnasync/Moviola Corporation). The project is a simple one: women filmmakers send in their videos, and they get included



MIRANDA

JULY

on a 10-video tape "chainletter," which they get back in return. Almost 10 years after founding Joanie 4 Jackie, July continues to represent her own work—and she does it well.

July's video "chainletters" are echoed in the project she and artist Harrell Fletcher co-created in 2002, Learning to Love You More. Centered on a website of the same name, the project gives open-ended "assignments"—like "Write your life story in less than a day," or "Make a paper replica of your bed"—to all comers, and completed pieces are posted as they come in. The resulting ephemera—pictures of parents kissing, scripts for imaginary phone calls, and many more oddities—have been displayed in museums, naturally, but also in retirement homes, grade schools, and community centers, keeping with the egalitarian ethos that started July down this path to begin with.

It's hard to count how many fairy tales start on a path through a dark

and unfamiliar place. They start that way because we know what such a place is like. We've been down those paths and we've been scared and surprised by where they take us. July—an artist, filmmaker, independent thinker, feminist entrepreneur—has been down more paths than most in her 31 years, and now, after emerging a little bruised and a little worn from the latest one, she's gearing up to head down another.

Maybe July will make another feature film. Maybe she'll even make it in the Hollywood establishment that so desperately needs a vision like hers. But maybe she won't. Maybe she'll go back to the "old way," making her funny little videos and ambitious performances.

Maybe she'll do something totally different. Maybe July will live happily ever after—but she'll be the one writing the tale.

Interview by **Daniel Sinker**

Photographs by **Miranda July**

This has been some year for you, hasn't it?

Yeah, it's been really crazy. [Laughs.] But I know when I think it's been crazy, it's probably different from how it seems from the outside.

Well it seems pretty crazy from the outside, too. I mean, have you even had a chance to stop and take it all in?

Not really. This last week, I took a vacation—which was funny because all sorts of things came up while I was on it, which meant that it was very hard to vacate. So I haven't been able to take it all in. A lot of the time I'm just trying to get my bearings.

What has that experience been like?

The thing is, actually making the movie was a big leap into a world that has a lot of working conventions. A lot of people have made movies, and I didn't make it some radically different way—which was a new thing for me, to make something I wanted to make but to follow a traditional approach in doing it. The hardest thing about making the movie was following those conventions, but that difficulty was grounded in the fact that I was essentially doing what I've always done: just making something. Ultimately, the creative part is the main part. Also I was lucky and had control of the final cut of the movie—I know people whose first films have been out of their control, and this wasn't. But to be honest with you, this year of promoting the film and being recognized for it has been *much* more disorienting.

That's how I would imagine it to be. Doing

work the way you had been doing it before—or the way that so many of us that do work in the independent world do—it's like you do your work, it's out there, and then you go and do your next project. But this has been such a different process—you've got to get out there and promote, promote, promote.

Before, interviews were a really special thing. It meant that someone—probably a friend of a friend—had discovered my work and wanted to share it with a larger audience. It's so weird now because most of the interviews I do—like when I have to do 15 in a row, which is completely normal for this kind of promotion—it's a totally different thing. It really becomes a form of torture. [Laughs.] But even still, you're talking about something that comes from your heart and it's something you really do care about and you think is important, but anything you talk about that many times and repeat the same five answers so often, it changes.

How does it change your relationship with the thing?

Well, to be honest I haven't watched the movie for months and months. I think I stay away from it to protect it and to keep it new. I'll watch it again when I'm through with all of this. So in these interviews, when I'm talking about the movie, I'm talking about *talking about* the movie. No one realizes that, but I'm not even thinking about the movie, I'm thinking about answering questions. But I guess anything you do and try to do with your whole self, even if it's impersonal and bureaucratic, you can get to new places. Occasionally, af-

ter 15 interviews, I'll be talking to someone and I'll have an epiphany—sometimes it's totally unrelated to the movie or the interview—and that makes you realize that living is living and you *have* to bring yourself to where you are.

Even though there have been moments that have felt like torture, as you've said, how much just feels like wonder as well?

Well, I feel sad about this, but at this point all I want to do is be home and have consistency. Even though I'm going to these countries I've never been to before, I don't really experience them because I'm just there to do press—I guess I could ask for extra days beyond my press days, but I don't because, frankly, I just want to be home. It's odd: Being alone in a hotel room in a place that I don't know anyone. A lot of these places I've never been to: I've never been to Paris before, I've never been to France, and now I've gone three times because of this movie because it's been so popular there. But I want to go to Paris again for real this time because I did *nothing* there. Just today I got my French press book, which contains all the interviews I did there, and it's like a phonebook. *No wonder* I felt crazy! [Laughs.] Getting to look at it is like a tumor removed.

With that kind of travel, you forget even where you are. It seems like you'd have to pack away little parts of you that can't be touched by the experience.

Yeah, totally. This year I've had a lot of self consciousness. I've had my picture taken a lot, and just trying to figure out my rela-



I ALWAYS HAD THE THOUGHT
THAT ONE DAY I'D MAKE A
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THAT'S HALF AN HOUR LONG, AND
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TIMES THREE.



stills from *Me and You and Everyone We Know*

tionship to that—for a young woman, it's kind of like the crucible because no matter how smart I am about it, it means *something*. I'm a feminist, but you can get caught up in it and get self loathing about it. They expect you to be wearing something different in every single picture, but I don't have that many pretty clothes. The "real" actresses get their fancy clothes donated, so they don't have to worry about it. ¶ In Paris, I had a little break and there were all these shops and I bought this felt and glue and scissors and I promised myself that when I got home I was going to make a banner about my anger at the media and my homesickness. Of course, when I got home I didn't have time to do it—I was so exhausted. Just yesterday I finally made the banner and it felt so nice to do. So I guess there are little systems—little things like that banner—I set up for taking care of myself. Also I do let myself enjoy different parts and have fun. But it's important to remind yourself that you might not have fun where other people want you to. Like I

don't really drink, which turns out to be a huge disappointment to some people—*Oh no, she's not having a good time*.

So when does this get to stop—or at least slow down—for you? With the DVD just coming out, does it all kick in again?

I know! Next month I do Spain, Greece, and Sweden, and then I think I won't have to travel for the movie again until it comes out in Japan next spring. And then I *think* that's the end. ¶ Speaking of the DVD, it was a real fiasco for me. Even though I had control over the movie—and that's the most important part—the DVD I had no control over. The DVD was put out by Sony, and when the company that did my movie, IFC, gave the materials to Sony for the DVD, they gave them these deleted scenes that I never wanted to appear on it. No one ever told me that the DVD was coming out even. I found out about it on Amazon! I was like "Wait, what is this cover?" I designed the poster for the movie and seeing this totally heinous cover just killed me. I was doing

an interview about the DVD for *Rolling Stone* and they asked for me to talk about the deleted scenes, and I was like "What deleted scenes?" Which is kind of a nightmare, because they're essentially your mistakes! It's enough sometimes to make you want to go back to the old way.

Let's talk about that: The "old" way versus this way. They're so different. When I first read some press about this film, I actually thought that it must be some other Miranda July, because making this larger-budget feature film seemed like such an unlikely thing for you to be doing. What initially made you decide to do this to begin with?

I think a lot of people have that thing in them where one day they'll write a novel or something: I always had the thought that one day I'd make a feature film. I'd made a short that's half an hour long, and so I figured it was just that times three. [Laughs.] I figured I would just shoot the film in the summer. I thought I needed about \$10,000, which seemed like a lot but

I figured I could write a grant and do it that way. That was the plan while I was writing the script. ¶ Someone who had seen my performance *the Swan Tool* in Austin knew about the Sundance writers' lab and suggested I send the script to them. I wasn't sure I wanted to. I looked on their website and had mixed feelings. I dropped out of college and while I feel like I made the right path for myself, because I haven't ever been that happy in any kind of institutional situation, I've always sort of felt a little bit like I never had that experience of having peers and you're all talking about your work together. In fact, coming up through the punk scene, no one talked about their work. I remember asking a friend how he thinks of his lyrics, and he just said "I get them off the cereal box." He was kidding, but it was like, "End of conversation." I think I was hungry for that kind of conversation in a way, so I submitted the script and it wasn't accepted. When it got rejected, I kind of got a chip on my shoulder. I submitted it two more times over the course of more than a year. ¶ When I got in the third time, I was actually pretty skeptical. There were a lot of Hollywood guy directors there, and their notes didn't always feel that applicable, but at the same time I had never shown anyone anything before it was done—unless it was a work-in-progress performance or something—and so there was something kind of great about it. In terms of how I'd been working, it was kind of radical and so it started to start to feel OK to go that route and to try and find financing for it. A lot of that was just meeting people who I could relate to, like my producer, who was my pal through this whole thing and looked for money with me. She's just a couple years older than me and was just starting out in this too, and we traveled all over the place together, and that felt familiar. ¶ When I first pitched the movie it was at this film market that's like speed dating—you talk to all these different people and different financiers. I was really nervous about it. The day before I had found these puzzle boxes on the ground, one of a koala and one of a zebra. I cut out the pictures from the fronts of the boxes and made little stands for them and during the pitch meetings I would bring out the koala and the zebra and put them

on the table and people would be utterly confused. They would say, "What does this have to do with the movie?" And I would say "It's just a visual aide." And they would either be like "OK, we're *definitely* not getting involved with these people." Or they would get the secret language that I was speaking. I was saying that this whole thing is so ridiculous and I have to have these animals here because it's the only thing that's keeping me sane; also I was sort of saying "I'm not going anywhere that these animals aren't going too."

It seems like, in some ways, the story of making this movie is the story of finding the people that could speak this secret language.

It's good to be reminded of that, because at the time it felt really treacherous. It feels really ugly and you feel out of it and people are just looking at you funny because they don't understand why you wouldn't want to have stars in your movie . . . The things that were said to me . . . I had some awful meetings.

So how were you able—in this totally crazy, foreign method of working—to keep what's important to you in perspective?

It's easier because I'm older. If this was happening and I was 22 and hadn't spent years and years doing things in my own way and feeling really happy and good about that, I would be less aware of what I was giving up. I think one thing about doing things the way I have for a decade is that, it makes it a lot easier to say no to things. I've always done things just the way I've wanted to, and more resources shouldn't mean having to stop doing that. ¶ But there were times this year where I felt very lost. There was a big photo shoot that theoretically seemed fun and everyone involved seemed nice, but during the shoot I actually had to dig my fingernails into my hip to keep from crying. Not because anything was so awful, but because I felt so far from myself. I felt like if someone I loved came up to me right then, I wouldn't even recognize them. So I try to be really aware of everything as I go along and articulate these things to my friends. I also try to look for people that will understand. There was a point in the year where I e-mailed someone who I know comes from a similar background as me

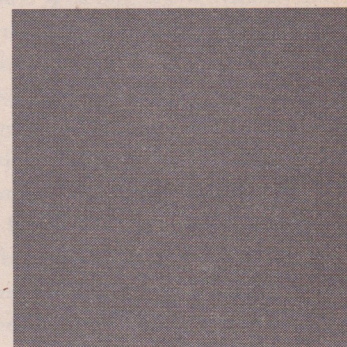
and made a movie as well. I sent him an e-mail saying, "I'm kind of going crazy, do you know what I mean?" And he said, "Oh yeah—just try and find time to write, and remember it's OK to say no." More than anything he told me, just the fact that I could talk about it with someone and not feel ungrateful or spoiled or anything.

How did you start doing performances and making films and everything?

I made this play when I was 16 that I put on at Gilman Street in Berkeley. I was in high school and I had one best friend: Johanna Fatemen who's in *Le Tigre* now. Back then we weren't cool or punk in any way. She was on the debate team, and I *wished* I was on the debate team. [Laughs.] But we were growing up in Berkeley and we were getting politicized. I don't know how, but we joined CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador, which was a little random because I didn't really have a clue what was going on in El Salvador, but I guess that's how high school is: some kids smoke a lot of pot, we decided to raise money to buy arms for the rebels. ¶ At the same time, I had this pen-pal who was in prison. I had never met him, but I got his address from the back of a magazine and, as part of my form of teenage alienation, I was writing him obsessively. It wasn't romantic or anything, and luckily he was a pretty good guy who was just happy to have someone writing him. I really wanted to explain why that relationship was important to me, but I couldn't really get it across to anyone. So I wrote this play and somewhere there's a review of it that appeared in *Absolutely Zippo* written by Larry Livermore, and I remember being so embarrassed because in the review it said something like I was this high school student and that I was "not even punk." Which in the review was meant as a compliment—*she's punker than all of us because she did something new, she wrote a play and put it on*—but he was very careful to say how I didn't have any piercings or tattoos and was very clean. And at the time I was totally mortified, because in putting on the play I decided maybe I did want to be punk! [Laughs.] ¶ That was right around when Riot Girl started, and Johanna was moving up to Portland, which was how initially I met all those people up there.



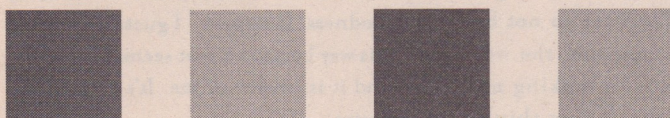
Miranda's felt banner



OLD FRIENDS HELP ME TO STAY SANE DURING ALL THIS—THEY'LL FREAK OUT AT THE APPROPRIATE TIMES, BUT THEY'RE DOING THAT BECAUSE THEY KNOW WHERE I COME FROM.



still from Atlanta



She met Kathleen Hannah her first year up there. Me and Jo were doing a fanzine and the girls from Sleater-Kinney—who at the time were the girls from Heavens to Betsey and Excuse 17—Corin and Carrie, liked our fanzine and we became friends. It was the right time. I went to UC Santa Cruz briefly, but I wanted to be up in the Northwest.

It sounds like you really found a community up there.

Yeah, totally. It was the first time I had anything like that. It had its treacherous qualities full of drama and everything, but yeah. Carrie is still one of my best friends and she and I will look back and be like, "Wow." You need people like that. She went to Sundance with me when the movie premiered. These old friends help me to stay sane during all this—they'll freak out at the appropriate times, but they're doing that because they know where I come from.

One thing that's interesting to me when thinking about you going up to Portland and starting to really concentrate on your art is that you went up and were part of this community—people you were like-minded with—and so what do you do? You retreat into your bedroom and make art by yourself.

[Laughs.] Right. I know. I felt very aware that I wasn't rocking out in a band like everyone else was. It's hard to believe now that that world could feel uninviting—and maybe that's not it, but I did always feel like I had to prove myself. I definitely had some tours before anyone knew who I was where I'd be booked between two really aggressive guy punk bands. I'd do my thing and people wouldn't even know I was doing it. I'd have to stand there and say, "This is it, I'm doing it now." But I liked the Do-It-Yourself immediacy of that world and I missed that when I moved further into the "proper" performance art world. It was great to have the resources and time to rehearse and all of that, but as I made my way up in that world, I made a decision not to go too far. Some people just tour forever, to all the arts and lectures programs and all the universities, and you get paid well and it's a pretty sanitized route. I had just started going down that path a little bit and

I realized, "Oh, this isn't it either." I liked the accessibility and the intimacy that I had before.

You're coming from this DIY punk world in Portland, but you're also quite successful in this art world—you've been included in the Whitney Biennial, getting grants to make art, things like that. So how do you bridge those two worlds?

It's funny to me: This year with the movie I've been called an artist in all my press. Especially in other countries, press for the film has billed me as a *huge* art star. You have a more complete understanding of where I'm coming from, but most people don't. People will ask me what gallery I'm with, and I have to tell them that I don't have a gallery—I've never had commercial representation because I've never had anything to sell. I'm not a commercial artist. There was a point where I could have made my videos limited edition, but instead I started Big Miss Moviola/Joanie 4 Jackie and I took a hard stance against that. I tried to convince other women that we would benefit more from having a big audience of other women than having just a few collectors. I opted out from *actually* being in the art world. The Biennial things were funny because the first one the curator had heard some of my Kill Rock Stars albums and asked if I wanted to make a sound installation. So my first sound installation was for the Whitney Biennial—you'd think I should have done that before. I guess it's always the same thing: You try and take the good parts of what's being offered. Unlike some people, I've always had a big investment in having an audience. Part of me would have been thrilled to have performed in malls and had the most mainstream of audiences. That part of me is always drawn to the audiences that come with these different worlds.

Clearly, if you're doing performance art and acting in your own films, there's an extroverted quality that goes along with that. But your work also has an inherent shyness in it.

Yeah, definitely. I am shy. Unless I get into something that allows me to not be shy, or hit it off with someone, the way that I feel comfortable is by making my work. That's the most reassuring thing.

I feel much more comfortable on stage with all those people in front of me than I do at a small party. For this hour that I've been given on the stage, it's totally OK to be myself. That's my job for that hour. I don't always give myself that permission; I feel much more self-conscious than that, or self-critical.

So you need to be on stage to be you?

[Laughs.] Well, no. Most of my life I'm either not at a party or on stage—I'm in my house or I'm with my friends. That's most of me and I'm fine with it. I don't have any more problems than anyone else.

In looking at your work—the scope of all of it and trying to see how all of the dots connect—there's this big theme of miscommunication. So often it feels like it comes down to two people having a conversation, but neither one can hear what the other is saying.

It's funny, because as you were saying that there was a plane flying overhead really loudly and really low—even before September 11, that was one of my big fears—so I was just like, "OK, you're talking and I'm going to die now." Somewhere really far away you were saying something about miscommunication. What were you saying?

Miscommunication feels like such a central part of the work in a lot of ways. And yet at the same time so much of your work is about trying to communicate as well. I keep coming back to this image of you in your room alone making work about trying to communicate with other people.

Yeah. I'm staring at my felt banner right now and in one part there's a girl walking through darkness with a flashlight and there's another girl who's on the edge of a cliff about to fall off. [Long pause.] For me, my inner world feels fairly cataclysmic on an hourly basis. The crucible that my work comes out of is my experience of how I am inside. I'm trying to fight the good fight. I'm trying. My boyfriend always says, "You go through some dark places, but you always come out into the light, and that's what's remarkable about you." Things can get as dark as they do for me, but I come out on the side of humanity and goodness. [Long pause.] I guess it's hard to talk this way because it just seems so grandiose—and it is, inside of me. It's everything; it's massive.



Love Diamond



The Swan Tool

FOR THIS HOUR THAT I'VE BEEN GIVEN ON THE STAGE,
IT'S TOTALLY OK TO BE MYSELF.

This idea of coming into the light—I think that there's a lot of hope in that. That hope informs so much of your work—your personal artwork, but also the work that really engages in the world, things like *Joanie 4 Jackie* or *Learning to Love You More*. Those projects are about telling other people to come into the light too.

Yeah, I can see that.

There's something in those projects that is so much about urging people to take a risk—*send us your movie, or here's an assignment, now send it back to us*. It's very public. It's not about incorporating these things into your own work, but instead about attaching these people's names to it and presenting their work as their own. What drives you to do that? What drives you to drag people out into the light?

I was talking with a friend recently about how I feel fairly determined to come up with a new way that movies can happen. I need an alternative to this system that has

made this year so hard for me. I want to make more movies, but I don't want to do it exactly like this. I know a lot of other people don't either, but there's not really an alternative. It's funny because I don't even have a new script—I'm actually working on a book of short stories right now—but I'm just as excited about making this system for other people to utilize. I think maybe it's a little bit of a flipside to that loneliness and of being in my room alone. ¶ I recently met a friend who knew me in first grade. And she said, "Remember the Polar Bear Association?" She reminded me how I had basically unionized our tag game in first grade. The whole class had to be a part of the Polar Bear Association, and there were great things about it: the boys and girls all had to play together in one tag game, and also we had meetings, and I made badges for everyone. [Laughs.] It's funny because I remember first grade as being really lonely; I was out of it and I had this eye disease

that made me feel like a freak. But the flip side of that was wanting to create something for everyone, and I guess that gave me a way to feel a part of things.

In some ways isn't that what you're doing now? You make this movie the way that you're "supposed" to make a movie, and the process is both invigorating but also alienating—and certainly this year of promo and the release of the DVD has been further alienating—and so in a lot of ways you're making the Polar Bear Association again, saying, "OK I'm not going to play tag that way anymore."

Yeah, definitely. I remember the feeling when I realized I could drop out of college, which may not be that big of a deal for some, but coming from intellectual parents it was really radical. When I dropped out it was because I realized that everything doesn't have to be a drag: if you're unhappy, you can just do it a different way. The total elation that comes with that realization is just amazing. ©

By the time you read this, the book will be closed on Curl Up and Die. It was a real page turner, though: Formed in 1998 in Las Vegas, Nevada, Curl Up and Die somehow became one of the best, yet most underrated, hardcore bands in the scene. Their first full-length for Revelation Records, *Unfortunately We're Not Robots*, showed promise, but it was the one-two combination of the *We May Be Through With The Past...* and *...But The Past Ain't Through With Us* EP's that really cemented their place among the upper echelon of hardcore bands that were actually doing something worth giving a shit about.

Flash forward to this year. Their second full-length record for Revelation also turned out to be the final one for the band. *The One Above All, The End Of All That Is* is a considerable swan song, filled with honest-to-goodness heart. Don't let the silly song titles fool you, "I'm Trying to Fly to the Moon Using Two Magnets and Willpower" will hit you where it counts. The titles are just nervous laughter covering honest emotion when exposed to the world—the line "I'm a still life overflow / I'm stuck below zero" is from the same song. It's not anything to be taken lightly by any means.

What is it about breaking up? Sure, the possibilities for new beginnings are great and all, but it's letting go of the past that's the first step towards recovery. Unfortunately, the past ain't through with us, even if this is the end of all that is. Curl Up and Die vocalist Mike Minnick took a few minutes to talk on the phone from Las Vegas, further proof that not everything that happens there, stays there.

Interview by **Dave Hofer**

Have you lived in Las Vegas your whole life?

Almost everyone here is from the suburbs. I live in Vegas, but I'm right on the border between the city and the big suburb on the west side. But everywhere is like no more than 20 minutes from the strip, which is the center. Half of us live on the east side of the strip and half of us live on the west side of the strip. The strip is right in the center, so you're almost always going through the city doing stuff.

Is there a difference between the two different sides?

Nah, it's all just the same gross stucco houses. ¶ People move here from places

and bring the shit they used to do in their old cities. It sucks. That, or people that live here, they live the tourist life. Not so much with the gambling, but they'll work their nine to five job and then go to a nightclub on the strip and party all weekend. There's a lot of people that do that. I don't understand it at all. There's a really small punk community, but outside of that, there's this polar opposite. There's not a lot of diversity. There's this small group here, and this big group that leads the tourist lifestyle.

What's it like growing up in an area like that? Everything is so based on consumerism there.

I couldn't tell too much of a difference growing up. It's just like living in California. It's weird to see how people react to Vegas that haven't been here: "Oh, there's gambling in your 7-11 and corner stores?" You can drink on the street here. I can even drink in my neighborhood, if I wanted to, just walking down main street.

Do your parents still live there?

I still live with my dad when I'm home.

How does he feel about you choosing to not go to college and playing in bands instead?

He's secretly supportive of it, but he's the kind of father that never tells you that he's into it or that he's proud of you. For instance, I'll give him a new CD of ours and he'll tell me a couple of weeks later, "Yeah, I don't know about that stuff, man, I use it to keep me awake when I'm driving." But then I'll hear from my sister or friends of his when he's not around that he's really proud of me. He always wears our shirts at work and stuff. When our tour got cancelled, he said "if you need anything..." He helped me out.

My dad would do the same thing. He would ask why I would play in bands or play shows, but after we recorded something he'd be like, "Do you have something that I can play for the guys at work?"

Totally.

How does your mom feel about it?

I dunno. I don't really talk to my mom that much. She lives outside of the city a little bit, out of the way by the Hoover Dam. I'll

give her a CD and she'll be like, "Yeah, it's good, it's really great!" But I'm not even sure that she listened to it. Or, she'll see my tattoos and be like, "They look really good! I thought I'd be shocked and freaked out, but they look OK, Mike!" Then, she'll tell my sister when I'm not around, "I can't believe he's got those! He's got those for the rest of his life!" Or she'll be like, "Are you dating any girls?" And then she'll tell my sister "I think he's gay! Is he gay?"

When did your parents split?

I was in sixth grade.

How did that affect you?

My dad kept the house, and my mom got an apartment that was out of the school district but she would drive us to my dad's house until the end of the year and then we switched schools. It was a little weird. At first I acted like it didn't affect me at all, but that was the age when I was starting to get into Nirvana and stuff. I was totally freaking out a little. No one's parents split when their kids are 30.

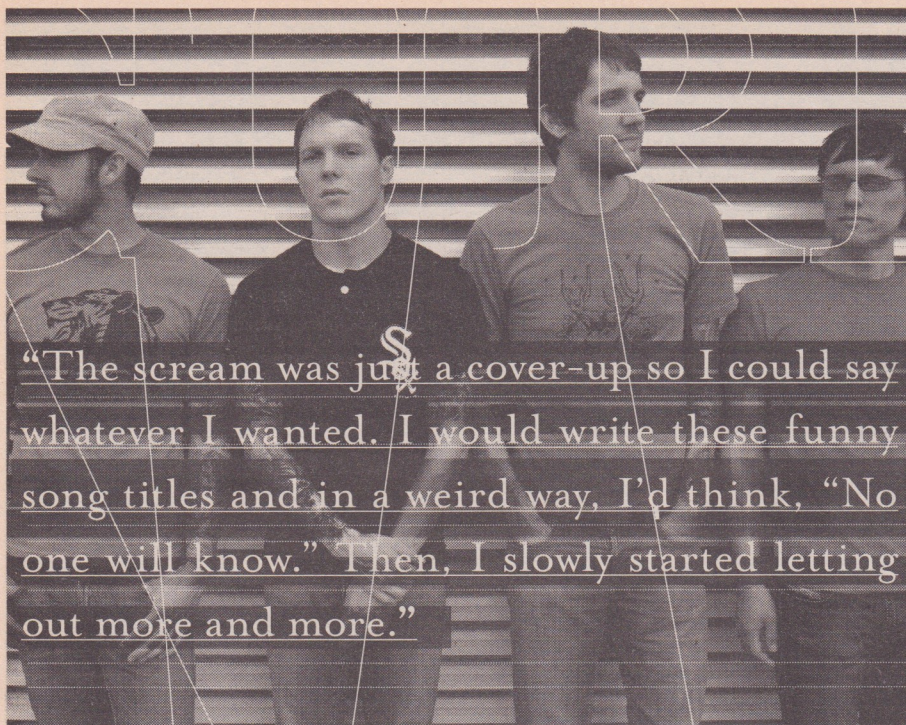
Would you say that that led you to start writing or being in a band? No offense, but your lyrics are a little miserable to read.

Yeah, yeah. Some of it might stem from that, because it was pretty weird and I still have vivid memories from that time. That's when I got more interested in music—I bought a guitar and started writing a little bit. It might have stemmed from that or other places, too.

For example?

Well, my uncle for one. I was in love with him, like every kid is, I guess. My uncle was a younger uncle, he was only like 10 years older than me, so when I was 8 he was 18. He lived at my house, so him and his friends would go skate and do stuff and have all these records by the Misfits. I remember that being the first band I really heard outside of Michael Jackson. Before anything, it was all Michael Jackson when I was a kid. But he would give me tapes of the Misfits and stuff, and then I'd start listening to his Black Flag records. Black Flag, the Misfits, and Minor Threat were like the first three bands that I got into. After that I heard Nirvana on the radio. They were the first band like that on TV





S“The scream was just a cover-up so I could say whatever I wanted. I would write these funny song titles and in a weird way, I’d think, “No one will know.” Then, I slowly started letting out more and more.”

and were super accessible but all noisy and crazy too.

It seems like everyone that I know that has an uncle has a crazy uncle.

Mine was like Uncle Jesse from *Full House*. Now he has two boys who are like four and six. I just hung out with them and it's the most fun ever. One of them will only wear his peter pan costume when he's not in school and they're just like “It's cool, whatever.” They just want to hit me and climb on me. They love me. My uncle's like, “This is payback from when you were a kid and I had to deal with this shit!”

It seems like you have a pretty good sense of humor based on your song titles, but they seem to be a cover-up for what the lyrics really are. What's the point of having these titles that have nothing to do with what the songs are about?

In the beginning, they would have nothing to do with the song, or be a reference to something that no one would ever be able to get. It was *totally* a cover-up. When I was writing songs, I was like, “I guess I have to write lyrics, I don't know what to do.” I never sang, I just would scream. The scream was just a cover-up so I could say

whatever I wanted. I would write these funny song titles and in a weird way, I'd think, “No one will know.” Then, I slowly started letting out more and more. On the newest record, the song titles are goofy and have a humorous side, but they're all related to the songs in some way. They're all pretty serious, but humorous at the same time.

Would you say that you had a problem opening up on records?

Yeah, it was the weirdest thing. I was not into it at all. I didn't even know *why* I was doing a band. I want more than anything to be able to talk in front of people and not be nervous. I was the kid that just wouldn't do oral reports in school—I would just fail. At shows I always make a mess of myself. I remember playing our first shows and it was just like doing reports in school. I would talk and my voice would crack, so I stopped talking for the first year or two of playing. I would sweat a lot, just these big baloney stains on my shirt. One time it was a navy blue shirt, I remember, and some dude was like, “What's wrong with you? Are you nervous? You're sweating so much!” I was just like “Fuck. I am never talking again.” I would only wear black shirts for a while so no one could see if I

would be sweating. I still get nervous. I just start mumbling when we play. I try not to, but it still happens if I'm not thinking about it. It's gotten a little bit better, but I'm still afraid.

If you knew all of this going into this, why did you decide to be the one that writes the lyrics and has to go on stage in front of everybody?

I wanted to do it more than anything. It just took pushing. I wouldn't want to do it sometimes, but I figured what else am I going to do? I'm more comfortable playing now than anything else, but it's weird. Even still before we play, I'm like “Oh, god...” but I know it's going to happen, so it's OK.

You don't have to answer this if you don't want to, but did you get picked on a lot when you were younger?

At times. When I was a kid, I was pretty insecure. Any kids that would make fun of me—like the cool kids—even if it wasn't big, I would take it so hard. If you ask the guys in the band or people that have known me for a while, I used to be super defensive. I'm still pretty paranoid, but I'm not as defensive. I think it's just the way I am. I tried to cleanse myself of that, but it just sticks there.

It seems that a lot of similar people are drawn to punk rock or hardcore. Do you think that punk rock is becoming less and less a place where outcasts can find refuge, or more of something that's cool to do?

I think there're a few things there. One, hardcore and punk are bigger. There's people that are coming to it for different reasons. I go to a show and someone will be like, “This band is awesome. They're brutal. Let's fight!” It can be the same as going to a pop show... generic and going through the motions. But there're kids that are just listening to 7"s, talking about how punk is dead and the underground is gone and major labels are buying it up. But, it's still there. There're still amazing punk bands now, and there were still amazing punk bands when Green Day became way more popular. You just have to dig deeper. ©

artwork by Nadine Nakanishi
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FREE
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One tends to believe Luc Sante when he tells you he was present at the great sell-off of the past. As gentrification in New York City shifts into high gear and the city's history and its poor are rehabbed, developed, and priced out of existence, what do we lose in the crush?

It was precisely that question that drove Sante to write one of the most fascinating love letters to a city ever written, the book *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*. In those pages one discovers the secret history of a New York now all but forgotten. As someone that came of age in the storied days of New York's 1970s punk scene, it may be a surprising choice for Sante to have written about events almost a century earlier, but Sante's research resurrects the ghosts of thugs, laborers, bohemians, grifters, corrupt cops and dueling fire brigades. But the book works because there's more than just colorful characters and outlandish anecdotes. The book contains a powerful evocation of what it felt like to live in New York then—what it sounded like, what it smelled like, what posters were pasted to a lamppost in 1870.

Perhaps only a former poet like Sante could pull it off, or maybe he had the perfect vantage point from his East Village perch, just before everything changed. While he moved there 50 years after *Low Life's* characters and tales departed, he says not much had changed over the decades. To hear Sante tell it, 1970s New York sounds so accessible—a person could room with Jim Jarmusch in college, live a couple floors below Ginsberg, witness the rise of punk rock, buy fabulous clothes for three dollars and live in a storied apartment for \$150 every other month.

It's easy to talk whistfully about the past—some who survived the 70s punk scene have based their entire careers on it—but what is striking about Sante is his lack of sentimentality. He's more interested in *understanding* the past than lamenting its loss. He matter-of-factly states that he can no longer afford his old neighborhood, and that he doesn't enjoy going back. It seems Sante's really interested in seeing our current times through a lens of the past. While economists seek to explain the world through a free market theory, Sante seeks to understand it through his "flea market theory of the world". Which perfectly sums up his approach: reverential, sordid and always on the lookout for a bargain.

Interview by **Tarikh Korula**

When did you move to the East Village?

I stayed on the Upper West Side, living with Jim Jarmusch and another friend of ours, George Winslow, and then we all moved downtown in '78. ¶ I started going to CBGBs early in '75 and actually had been following the career of Patti Smith for years before that, I first went to see her in '73. Going to CBGBs—it was a night when we actually had tickets to see Marvin Gaye at the Apollo. We turned up at the Apollo and Marvin had called in sick. They gave us our money back so we went to check out CBGBs. There had been some dismissive thing in the Voice—"skanky club with bad acoustics." We went down there and it was Patti Smith and Television and it knocked us out and we were chained to that scene for the next couple of years. ¶ I worked at the Strand bookshop and the place was just packed with musicians. One of the first people I met was Lux Interior who was in the process of starting The Cramps. Just about all the "No New York" bands had at least one member in there. The Contortions, DNA, Teenage Jesus and the Jerks.

Was there a sense of how important the scene was, or was it more like a bunch of friends hanging out and inspiring one another?

It was both at the same time, two contradictory ideas. One was, "This is amazing and important and we're doing great things." The other was, "We're kidding ourselves, nobody's ever going to hear of us." It was very different from the way it was in England. In England, these bands would put out a record with 300 copies and somehow it would make its way to John Peel and he'd play it on the radio and suddenly there was the possibility of touring and people had heard of you and you'd be written about in the *NME* and stuff. There was nothing like that in America, you were completely divorced from all media. The *Village Voice* might occasionally write about bands. But you didn't have a prayer of getting your record on the radio. You still felt very isolated, like you're doing something important but it was in a vacuum.

How much did that scene and the people you knew influence the work you were doing at the time?

Plenty. I would actually write during Television performances. For at least three years they were my favorite band in the world. I could actually point to some pieces that had their genesis during some long version of "Marquee Moon" At

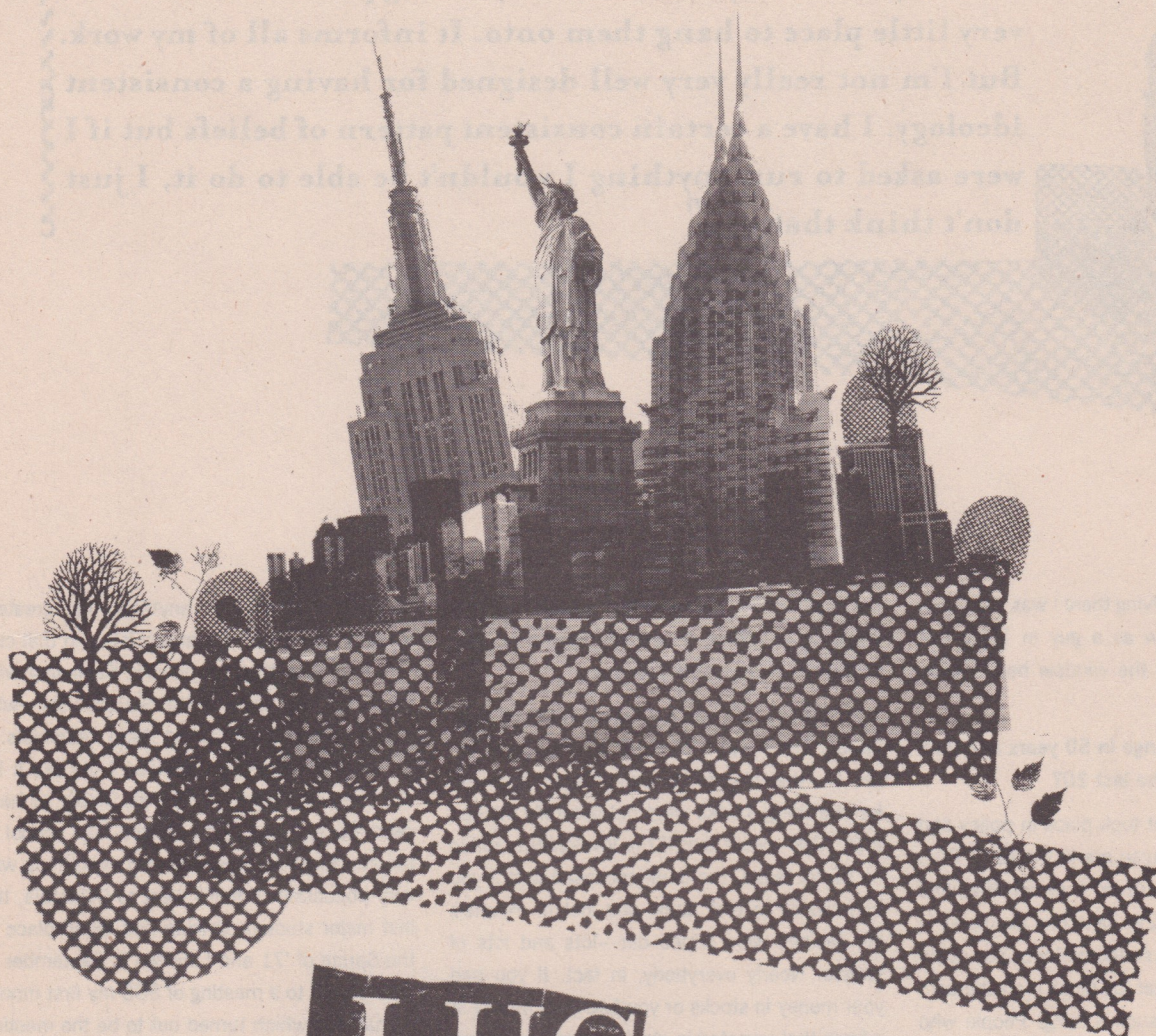
the time I was writing a kind of poetic prose; it had one foot in fiction—but it wasn't altogether there yet—and I felt like a lot of the wiring came out of the music I was listening to.

Was it difficult making the transition from writing prose to building a life around non-fiction writing?

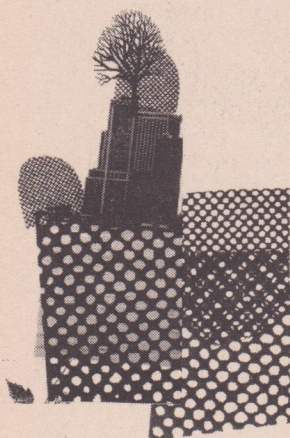
It completely happened by accident. I didn't know how to make a life around writing. I wrote stuff that I published in little magazines with small circulations and got paid no money for it; I did that for years. I wanted to be a writer and I wrote a bad novel that I never did anything with. It was only by complete fluke that I got a job in the mailroom of *The New York Review of Books*. After I had been there for a year I was asked to become an editorial assistant, and after I had been an editorial assistant for a few months, I looked hard at the kind of pieces that they published and how they were edited and stuff like that, I decided I could do it too. I knew that they had been trying to find somebody to review Albert Goldman's biography of Elvis Presley and everybody had turned them down, so I stole their book from the offices over the weekend and wrote the review and turned it in on Monday and they published it. My entire career came out of that one thing.

The scope and subject matter of *Low Life* is amazing. I don't think there's anything else quite like it.

Well, thanks. At the time it came out there really was hardly anything about New York history in print except for the driest academic sort of stuff and very little about the slums. Now there's a lot available that wasn't available 15 years ago. But at the same time, living history in the streets is so much more remote than it was when I wrote *Low Life*. I feel like the 19th century was a lot closer 15 or 20 years ago than it is now. The Fulton Fish Market, is just about to move out—going to the Fulton Fish market, seeing it in operation, was a direct connection between you and the 19th century. There were so many things like that just in the East Village in the '70s and early '80s alone. There were little stores that had been opened by their present owners in the 1920s—not that much had changed. You felt like the past was tangible, you could feel it. To a certain extent that's still available in the tenements, but it's just the architecture. They've been sandblasted on the outside and gut-rehabbed on the inside,



LUC SANTE



"At this point in my life I have very strong political beliefs and very little place to hang them onto. It informs all of my work. But I'm not really very well designed for having a consistent ideology. I have a certain consistent pattern of beliefs but if I were asked to run anything I wouldn't be able to do it, I just don't think that way."

whereas when I was living there I was still opening the same window as a guy in 1912 had opened. And in fact, the window hadn't been repaired since 1912!

Why did so little change in 50 years and then so much change in the last 20?

With the changes that took place in policy and economics in the Reagan era in the early '80s, it was really picking up on a sweep that had last been seen in 1929. Take one example: in the 1920s there were condominiums, you could buy an apartment. After the stock market crash, nobody could afford such a thing. People who had that kind of money bought a house instead and people who didn't rented. That didn't start up again until the '80s. There's all sorts of ways the massive infusion of cash into the city stopped with the stock market crash. By the time economic recovery was in full swing after World War II, that's when the middle class booked—they all went out to Long Island and New Jersey and invested in tract houses, so even though there was an economic recovery going on it didn't affect the city. It affected office buildings—6th Avenue, lower Park Avenue and stuff like that—but in terms of the tenement districts, they were frozen in place. No capital improvements were made between the 1920s and the 1980s.

If much of the development in New York stopped after the crash in 1929, why didn't

the crash of '99 have a similar effect? Far from stopping anything, it actually seems to have accelerated the whole process.

The crash in '29 was a different order of magnitude. There was a crash in '87 too, don't forget. But the crash in '29 was different because, for one thing, banks were not federally insured then. That meant that if the investments made by banks failed, the bank collapsed and if you had money in that bank, you lost it. People's life savings were wiped out—lots and lots of people. Nearly everybody, in fact. If you had your money in stocks or you had your money in a bank that invested in stocks, your money was gone. The crash in '99 was a pop compared to the crash in '29.

What are you working on now?

I'm actually writing a book on Paris right now, I just got a contract in the Spring and I've only gotten started on it. I think it will in some way end up being something like a *Low Life* Paris.

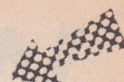
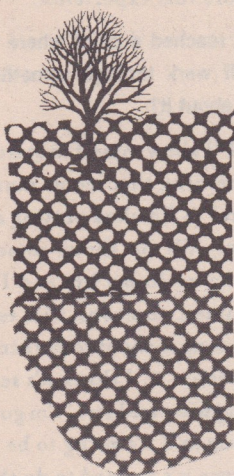
Have you picked a time period?

I know things I absolutely want to cover in it which go up to at least the '70s and go back to the 1830s and maybe the revolution.

It's interesting that you bring up the 1830s and 1968 in Paris: There's an implicit politics in some of your work but it's never overtly stated.

I've never been able to stomach the idea of

pledging allegiance to anything. My greatest sympathies lie with the anarchists and that current that runs through history. Beginning with Proudhon and down to the Situationists—who would *wretch* if you called them anarchists. ¶ As far as having overt politics, I did see a lot of it semi-up close. I'm a little young to have seen '68 up close, but I started high school in the city three months later and everything was very politicized. When I went to Columbia, the last major student uprising had taken place in the Spring of '71 and I started in September of '72. I went to a meeting of SDS my first month on campus which turned out to be the meeting in which the Columbia SDS chapter decided to dissolve itself. It was very strange after that. The major political factions were insane. *Literally* insane: The most prominent, visible manifestation of politics on campus was the most absolutely wild eyed schizophrenic, committable organization called the National Caucus of Labor Committees and it was headed by a man named Lynn Marvis, whose real name was Lyndon LaRouche [LaRouche is believed to be the mastermind behind numerous physical assaults and crimes against other groups at the time]. The paranoia of the period cannot be overestimated and, as a result, while keeping strong moral political beliefs, my friends and I just all retreated from political engagement for a while because it seemed to be completely in the hands of these lunatics. ¶ I always had a



"There's so many things like that: so many small, apparently trivial, aspects of life that go into really conditioning how you see the present day as you're walking through it. They have a way of affecting your memory as you go on even though you only remember the effect and you don't remember the cause."

lot of friends in Europe and there it was different, an awful lot of them wound up in jail. A lot of people spent their time trying to get involved in direct action and trying to blow up police stations, or just becoming thieves. And a lot of people got really fucked up by this. I saw a lot of people go to jail and then the alternative in the United States was that disillusionment led to people getting really badly screwed up on heroin and going down that road. ¶ At this point in my life I have very strong political beliefs and very little place to hang them onto. It informs all of my work. But I'm not really very well designed for having a consistent ideology. I have a certain consistent pattern of beliefs but if I were asked to run anything I wouldn't be able to do it, I just don't think that way.

On a less political note, it seems like some of your work focuses on surveying the detritus of popular culture. What is it about that that interests you?

I'm really interested in how times change and how the present just seems normal at all times while we're living in it—these ground conditions in which we live. Even if you remain living in the same house, in the same town, under the same conditions and seeing the same people, there's a distinct difference between this year and last year. And those differences won't be visible for a while. And this is especially true in the cities, you will remember that the feeling in the streets in 1978 was very different from

1979 or 2002 was very different from 2003. ¶ There's so much ephemeral business going on that affects you and then kind of gets discarded from memory. It's shrubbery: You don't notice it when you're looking at it and you forget about it after you're not looking at it. My son is six years old and we were in the car listening to his favorite musical group, the Beach Boys. We were driving down the highway and I was trying to explain to him how I remembered so many of these songs from when they were new in the mid '60s and they really were the sound of summer. You'd go anywhere and you'd hear them because they were on the radio all the time and there were radios in all these places. You'd go to the pizza parlor and there would be a radio on, you would walk down the street and you would hear radios coming out of cars, you'd go to your friend's house and there would be radios on in the kitchen. That kind of unifying experience of radio doesn't exist anymore. There's so many things like that: so many small, apparently trivial, aspects of life that go into really conditioning how you see the present day as you're walking through it. They have a way of affecting your memory as you go on even though you only remember the effect and you don't remember the cause. ¶ I've always been interested in junk. Junk and me go way back, I've been going to flea markets since I was a kid.

There's something about collecting junk that's anti-elitist and popular and somehow plays

into one's politics but I'm not sure how.

I'm actually gearing up to write something about the "flea market theory of the world." The first sentence is, "I was present at the great sell off of the past." The punk look of the '70s completely derived from the fact that at that time there were all these stores in downtown Manhattan where every item of clothing cost three dollars. Most of these clothes came out of dead stock from the Midwest. They were things that had been left at dry cleaners in about 1957 and never picked up and sat in warehouses until some enterprising entrepreneur decided to purchase these job lots and sell them for three dollars a throw. We all had these incredible shirts and shoes and topcoats from the '50s and early '60s that we bought for nothing. If you look at every record jacket of that period, they're all wearing these clothes because somebody thought, "This is old, this is junk, let's get rid of it." ¶ Now of course, especially with eBay, everything has become a collectible. I didn't realize the extent to which this had mutated until I read some point about Quentin Tarantino and his collection of cereal boxes. The guy has the world's largest collection of cereal boxes—he has every cereal box ever made. The past went from being this discard—just like the tenements in New York which were discards so we moved into them because they were cheap—to being entirely commodified. It's more or less disappeared. ©

Walter Schreifels was never the same after his older brother took him to a double-feature of *Rock'n'Roll High School* and *The Kids are Alright* in the early 1980s. His 11-year-old eyes widened as the raw intensity of the Ramones and the Who dropped an atom bomb on his concept of what music could be. As he watched the Blitzkrieg Bopping and guitar smashing, a flame inside Schreifels's young spirit ignited, and has managed to carry him through more than two decades of immersion in music.

But that's not the only switch the films flipped on him. Since that fateful day, Schreifels has had a drive to continually up the ante on his contemporaries the way that Pete Townsend and Joey Ramone did to him. Throughout his musical career, his unbridled, go-for-the-throat passion has consistently manifested itself in previously unexplored directions. While many punk-rock vets insist on rehashing the same old blast-beats and mosh-parts, Schreifels forges new trails while pulling the scene along like the Pied Piper with each new project: from the melodic straight-edge anthems of Gorilla Biscuits to the genre-defining, post-hardcore epics of Quicksand and even the hook-laden rock of Rival Schools.

Some have called Schreifels a hardcore legend because of his oft-referenced early work, but applying a term like "hardcore" to Schreifels is limiting. It would be more accurate to compare his work to that of one of his main musical inspirations, the ever-evolving David Bowie. The modest Schreifels would likely shrug off this comparison with humor; the listener, however, would be remiss not to notice some similarities.

Now, Schreifels is back with *Walking Con- cert* (Some Records), a glamorous, tuneful confection that is equal parts classic Kinks-style mood-rock and American-bred Pavement-esque slacker pop. The band's frequent and fervent output makes it clear that Schreifels is still re-inventing himself with the same chutzpah that characterized his circle-pit-inducing days. And, like Ziggy Stardust himself, Schreifels is handling his artistic maturity gracefully, albeit without the outlandish sense of fashion or the mid-career disco record . . . at least so far.

Interview by **Brian Peterson**

After seeing the Ramones and the Who up on the big screen, did you get the idea that, "Hey, I can do this, too"?

I didn't really think about whether I could

or couldn't do it; I guess I just wanted to learn how to play guitar. I guess that particular idea didn't really hit me at the time. I don't even know now whether I can *really* play music. [Laughs.] I guess it's just been my interest that's driven me. If I get to make a record or if I'm on the radio . . . that's exciting to me. I'm interested in making up a new song and I'm kind of compulsive about it.

Do you have a pattern when you write or do you operate more from inspiration?

There's always a guitar out at my house and if there's a guitar around I'm always going to play it. Sometimes I'll consciously try not to play it so that I don't get too obsessive about it.

Does it ever get to the point where you can't stop?

When you're playing guitar or writing a song you're in *that* world and not in the world that's happening around you. I think I can get too introverted and too into it and I'm not paying attention to what's going on around me. I like to be a well-rounded person; I don't want to play my guitar if it's going to stop my reading or not do the errands I have to run that day or not be able to talk to anybody. Guitar can become a way to avoid other things. As much as I love it—I can express my thoughts and feelings by writing—I can sometimes delve too deep into it and ignore everything else in my life, which means that I might miss other inspirations for songs.

Do you draw a lot from personal experiences in the songwriting process?

I try to. Anything that flows into making a song interesting or better is fair game for me. There are times when I'm frustrated and don't know what to write about or maybe I don't feel comfortable writing about a particular topic...it's sort of like when you don't feel comfortable talking about something with another person; it's the same thing with music. Sometimes I don't feel comfortable talking about anything personal so I'll write about something I do feel comfortable talking about—like maybe the sun is shining or it's raining out today—and that will lead me somewhere else that hopefully is personal. I think when you hit something personal that's usually the most

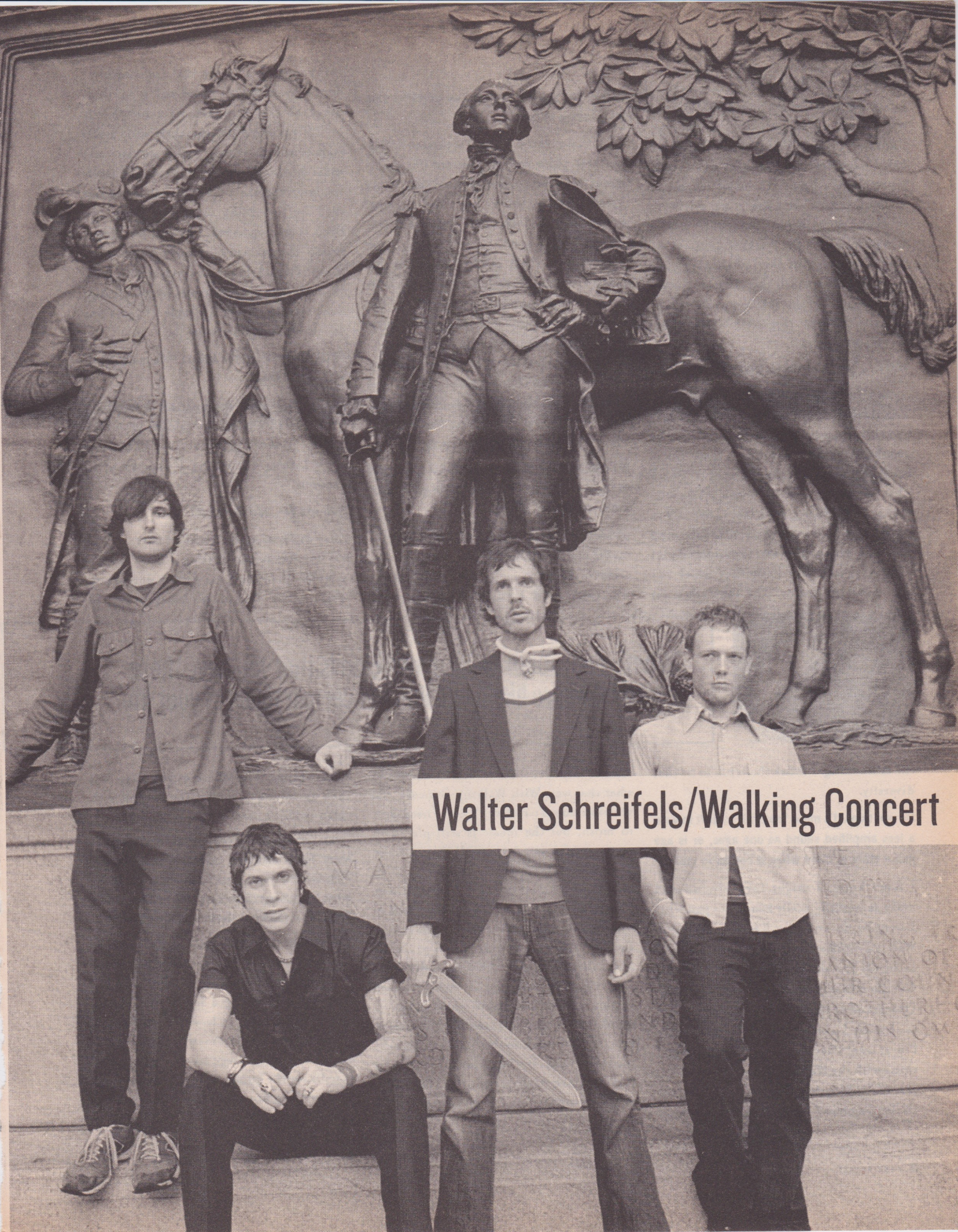
universal kind of art. If it's real to me then hopefully it'll be real to other people and they can tap into that experience.

Have you ever reached a point where you've helped yourself work through something by writing a song about it?

All the time! I'll allow myself to start writing about something that seems mundane and then when I'm finished putting all the words together it'll be about something else that's going on in my life and I'll see that. Other times, someone will tell me they think the song is about something and I didn't even realize it. I think it's scary to sit down with a guitar and say, "I'm going to write a love song and it's going to be really moving," because it's so hard to do that. "I love you, baby..." [Singing.] That's cheesy and you don't want to fail. So, I'll write about something that makes me feel good or something that I'm confident about and it will sometimes lead into the world of love if that's where it's meant to go. I think, at least for me, an easy thing to write about is being angry. I'm kind of bored with doing that, but it comes out anyways. When I think of Quicksand records, a lot of them came out like I was really pissed off. But as I've grown I think I tend to write with more of a sense of humor. I try to be honest and I try not to hide and I want to do what comes naturally and just let it go and not judge it too harshly.

A lot of your older music has an angry quality to it. How have you been able to let go of those feelings, or are they still there but just coming out in different ways?

You'd have to be a robot not to ever get angry. I guess I'm just not as interested in that as a shtick. When you're coming up in hardcore, that style of music is angry to begin with; if it wasn't angry music it would be called something nicer than that. [Laughs.] But it's coming from that youthful, "You don't understand me, man" type of feeling. I think there are more subtleties in how I express my anger now. When you're a kid you may express it in more obvious ways like through violence or something like that, but now I just express it in a different way. I still think there is anger in my music. But I guess now I don't mind being angry and I don't



Walter Schreifels/Walking Concert

mind being calm and cool. It's all good. I think with Quicksand I felt like it was my job to get all riled up and pissed off and write about my deepest, darkest feelings. I did that for a while and then I just realized I was kind of bullshitting at a certain point. [Laughs.] I got it out of my system to some degree. But there are no limits to what I write about. Someone recently said to me about the Walking Concert record that it's sort of deceptively poppy and sweet but underneath you can hear the aggression . . . where it's like pushing and pushing. I think that's something that's always in my work.

What do you think drives that pushing?

I guess rock-and-roll music is aggressive. The thing that got me originally rocking and rolling and playing guitar was the Who smashing their guitars or everyone "Blitzkreig Bopping" to the Ramones. That's what turned me on to music. The Ramones could sing a song like "I Want You Around," which is this beautiful love song and then they could turn around and play something like "Blitzkreig Bop" which was aggressive and funny. The Who could do

written before.

Would you say your music has mirrored your growth as a person?

What's cool about being a musician is, that you have these records that are like documents of certain times of your life. Music has that power, but it's way more personal for me with my own music. I can pull out, say, a Quicksand record and see the good parts and the shitty parts of my life at that time. The main thing I strive for is the most accurate representation of my life at that time and I've found that when I feel good about who I am and what I'm doing I'm usually more excited about the music that I'm writing and when I'm not feeling good those same things it also comes out in the music. And it's all good. The thing that sucks is when it's not represented properly.

Do you feel the youthful energy of your past musical projects still comes through in your more "seasoned" stuff?

Totally! I think what I'm doing now has elements of everything I've ever done, but I've allowed myself to be broader. When I was with Quicksand, I wanted to have a certain

think there is a totally vital and independent answer to that trend and it reminds me of the '80s when there were shitty bands on TV and the radio and there were really cool bands on college radio stations and indie labels. There are so many cool bands that aren't in the public conscious because they are just doing their own thing and that's inspiring to me. I guess I just always expect the mainstream music scene to be lame. [Laughs.] There was maybe a time in the early '90s when Nirvana hit that things were interesting for a couple of years but sure enough it got lame again.

What are some of the things that really motivate your music?

My own personal dysfunction is fascinating. [Laughs.] And also my ability to pay attention to what's going on around me and when I enjoy something I want to write about it.

How are you dysfunctional?

I feel dysfunctional in a lot of ways . . . the way my life is constructed I don't have a calendar in my house so I often don't know what day it is. That allows me to get excited



"What's cool about being a musician is that you have these records that are like documents of certain times of your life."

the same thing. I think there has to be that diversity.

Do you think it's more "natural" to drift toward a less amplified sound as one ages, or is age just a state of mind when it comes to music?

I don't know, I might turn around and make something really heavy; it's just what I want to do and how I feel at the time. Walking Concert doesn't sound like other bands I've done and I don't think the Gorilla Biscuits records sounded like the Quicksand or the Civ records and vice versa. I guess I always shift around in where I'm at and what I'm interested in. But I think with the Walking Concert record I'm just really free. It feels good to stylistically challenge myself and write songs I've never

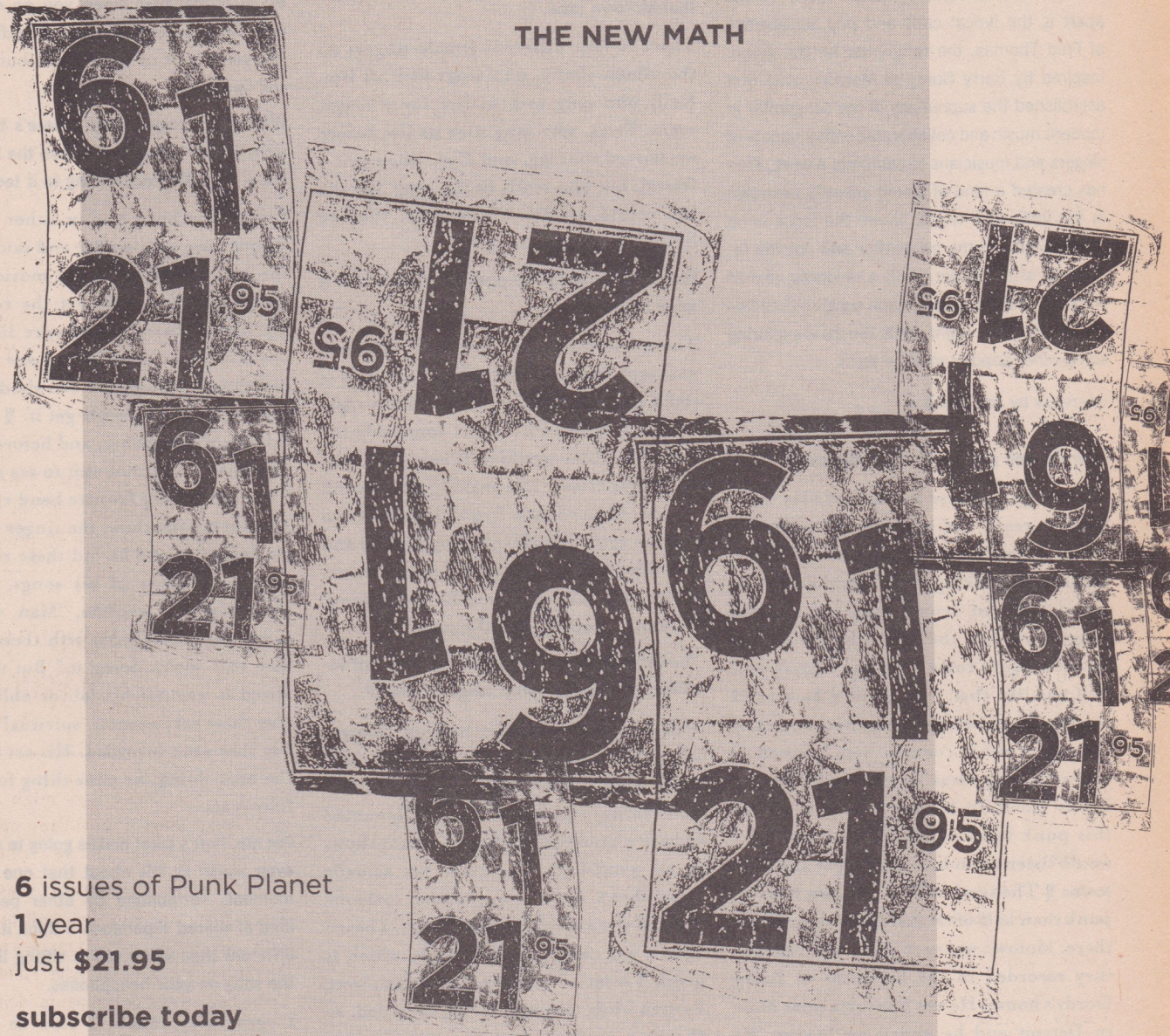
kind of audience reaction and I understood what that was. With Walking Concert, the reaction doesn't matter; I don't need kids to mosh, but the music is still played in an aggressive way. I guess all the stuff I've done represented that particular time in my life and it's all good for what it is, but I just feel like I'm really in command of what I'm trying to accomplish right now. ¶ I guess I try not to pay attention to trends and things like that. There are different motivations for creating art and right now in the mainstream music world it has so much to do with money and the industry is kind of on the run so they aren't really taking many risks. If a band hits, they try and make a bunch of clones of that. That stifles people's imagination. At the same time, I

about things that others might miss, but then again maybe I'm falling behind with other things I need to take care of.

Yeah, sometimes the best writers and artists—Mark Twain and Kurt Vonnegut pop immediately into my mind—use humor as a tool to address serious topics subversively and it makes it easier as a reader or listener to identify with.

Absolutely! I think humor is an awesome way to cope with the toughest of things . . . making lemonade out of lemons—that's what I'm into doing a lot of the time. I think with music, at least for me, it can get really serious. But even in my most angry, this-is-an-outrage moments I can still usually see the humor in it. There has to be a sense of humor otherwise things get too melodramatic. ©

THE NEW MATH



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Listen up: Saturday Looks Good To Me is as good as independent music gets. Influenced by the brass and string-tinged sounds of early Motown and the intelligently ironic ballads of Jonathan Richman, this Ann Arbor band presents wonderfully-written pop gems that resonate with both sincerity and wit.

What sets Saturday Looks Good To Me apart is the lyrical craft and pop sensibilities of Fred Thomas, the songwriter for the group. Inspired by Barry Gordy of Motown, who first established the supremacy of the songwriter in modern music and collaborated with a variety of singers and musicians to complete a work, Fred has created a kind of sound virtually unknown in the indie rock world, where the focus is on the brilliance of the songwriter and not the familiarity of the singer. With a revolving cast of vocalists and musicians, each song on their latest album, *Every Night*, finds the band exploring some other popular musical form.

Interview by Joe Meno

How did you get the idea for this band?

It's strange, because it is an old idea. Motown is really the jumping off point for any of the music this band makes. To save money, the backing band would do all the music and just record tons and tons of songs, and then they had a bunch of different singers come in later. Reggae and dub was like that, too; there'd be a band that would record these rhythms and then the singer would come in with a bunch of different song ideas. At the time Saturday Looks Good To Me got started, I was in this punk band called Lovesick and all I would listen to on tour was reggae and Motown. ¶ The truth of it is Motown is more punk than half of the hardcore records out there. Motown was such a DIY production; they recorded in the basement of Barry Gordy's house. He was just some poor dude in Detroit and he ended up buying the whole block. There are pictures of the Supremes putting 7"s into sleeves and photos of different Motown artists sitting around the kitchen table singing. That was something I could identify with. That aesthetic was what was influencing me. ¶ Sometimes I write songs where I'd like to hear a girl sing it; sometimes I'd like to have a saxophone on a song, so I'll get someone

to play it. At first it was just me playing all the parts myself, overdubbing stuff, which a lot of other bands do, like Bright Eyes or Of Montreal, but then we started playing live shows, which changed everything.

Every Night is your third album. On it, you seem to use vocalists like musical instruments—different singers for different sounds—based on that Motown idea.

There're four different female singers on the album—Betty, who sings with us live, Kelly who sang with us live for a couple years, Erica, who sang with us live before we started touring, and Coe, who's just a friend, but who really fit the song. On the last record, *All Your Summer Songs*, there're like a dozen vocalists or so.

Do you write songs for specific singers or is it more random?

There's definitely an element of randomness to it. Sometimes I'm like, "Oh, this is like a song Betty has to sing. This is right in her range and it's about somebody she doesn't like so it would be funny if she sang it." Other times, like making our second record, *All Your Summer Songs*, which took two years to record, I was traveling around and didn't have a fixed residence, so sometimes I'd be like, "This person is here right now, so they're going to sing the song."

The CD version of *Every Night* has different vocalists singing the same songs on the LP.

One of the reasons the line-up changes so much is that we're still relatively broke. Some people have to work or have school or have family things to do, but I really wanted to have a band that could do as many shows as we wanted to. The band has actually done shows without me, where someone else did the male vocals and guitar. I heard that it was really shitty, though, which is good. ¶ A lot of songs on the records were written while they were being recorded, so there's a good amount of improvisation. I'd play guitar and get an idea going and mess around with it, and put more and more on it, until it's a song. We did a lot of experiments with different mixes and different vocals and experimenting with it in stereo and mono. There's a song on *Every Night*, "Until the World Stops Spinning," which kind of has the same beat as "Heya" by Outkast, so we thought, "What if we de-

cided to produce it in the same way?" My good friend, Warren, and I were working on mixing the record and just had all these different ideas, so I thought, "Maybe I'll make a CD that has some songs on it and a record with different versions of the same songs on it." ¶ The idea that a song is ever finished or officially "done" seems a little bit silly, because when you go see a band live, sometimes it sounds all different. It's not your fault or their fault, but that's just the way it is.

With your songs though, there's the CD version, the LP version, and then the live version has a very different feeling to it too.

People have been mad in either direction. People have seen us live and said, "This is the best sock-hop, happy music I've ever seen," and then they get the record and are disappointed. Or they're like, "I really liked that band until I saw their stupid show." It's not for everybody and I'm just happy some people get it. ¶ I recently saw the Microphones, and before the show I was like, "I cannot wait to see this band. They are like my favorite band right now." But during the show, the singer had a Casio keyboard and he did these really funny-style versions of his songs, with like these dances. I was like, "Man, you're ruining my experiences with these songs, I hate that you're doing it." But then I realized it was not his job or obligation to play these very earnest, spiritual songs the way they were recorded. His art is his art. I've been doing the same thing for the past four years.

For me, that's what makes going to see a band even worth it: it's about that one particular moment, surrounded by other people—this kind of shared experience. I think it should be different than when you're sitting listening to the song on your headphones.

I agree very much. I hate to go see a band that sounds exactly like their albums. It's boring to me. But it's different for everyone.

The kind of influences you bring to Saturday are very complementary, but totally unique. What are the songs or records you go back to for inspiration?

It's really weird. I went to high school in the early '90s. I listened to *And Justice for*

SATURDAY

LOOKS GOOD TO ME




SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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All by Metallica like 800 times. I can still listen to that record and think how valid and amazing it is. But when I listen to the Pixies *Doolittle*—which I listened to so much when I was into it—now it doesn't sound like music. ¶ When I started this band, I was listening to Motown, and the Shangra-La's, and Redbird Records, and *Pet Sounds* by the Beach Boys, and Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde*. At a point, though, I realized I couldn't listen to *Pet Sounds* anymore. I listened to it every day for three years. I had studied that record. I always write notes on the music I'm listening to; I'm always writing notes, about what I hear and what I'm working on. Anything you work really hard on is a valid, important thing, so I had these books and books of notes and song ideas and different song orders and who should sing on what song. At some point, there's this block of text where I figured out that *Pet Sounds* was a perfect album and said, "OK, it starts with a jumpy song first and then it goes into this," and went through the record, song by song, emotion by emotion, completely in a language that was just for me. ¶ When *Summer Songs* came out, we went to Chicago and got the CD's from Polyvinyl and we were driving home and listened to it. Then we put in *Pet Sounds* and it was the exact same vibe, the same volume, the same level. It felt like a continuation. I thought

was really good and I put it out myself and pressed like 300 copies and sold it out of my living room to people that would come by. People really liked the songs and so we put together a live band and maybe played like five shows a year. Whoever was around and could learn the songs was in the band. It was all my friends and me and maybe we'd practice once before a show, and maybe there'd be a bunch of people there, and maybe nobody would be there. ¶ We did that for a couple of years and started working on the second record when the band Saves the Day called me up and was like, "You don't know us but we really love your record and do you have a band because we want you to come on this big tour with us." ¶ At that point, we had maybe played 10 shows total, it was so weird. All of a sudden there was this band with tour buses with four p.m. load-ins and we got \$100 a night and all the free beer we could drink and we played in front of 3000 people and had to do it like 25 times in 22 days. It really changed the songs. ¶ Then Polyvinyl put out our second record and got us a booking agent and we went from being this really relaxed idea to this band that toured non-stop for months and months and months. My mom would call and ask, "Is this right? It says here you're playing in Nevada this one day and playing a show

With your first two records, the lyrics seem to be very romantic and sentimental. With *Every Night*, there seems to be this theme of these people who are these jaded hipsters in a number of the songs like "When the Party's Over" and "When You Got to New York." In "Until the World Stops Spinning," there's a line: "Everyone's acting like there's nothing new to say." It's so apparent in indie rock, where you go to show and everyone is terrified of enjoying themselves because it might make them look stupid.

It's strange because I'm 29 years old and I didn't go to college and I've worked at a record store most of my life. My personal growth has always been connected to some musical growth as well. I've been playing in bands since I was 15 and always trying to use my art to chart my growth. So a record like *Summer Songs* was very sweet and a little heartbroken and was like a reflection of where I was at 25 and trying to go out with as many girls at the same time as possible. I was very much in love with all these things. ¶ But then going on tour, playing these shows, and then with the explosion of the Detroit garage rock scene, there'd be these record people from major labels talking to us at our fourth show ever about what kind of ring-tones we were going to have. Which is funny and interesting, but all these bands were like, "We're all

7 8 9 10 11 12 13  14 15 16

maybe I had accomplished the mission a little too well.

It's a kind of conversation. You were trying to have a conversation with Brian Wilson, and god knows, he wasn't having a conversation with you back. But that's how art works: whether you're a writer, a musician, or a painter, you respond to the things that you love. *Every Night*, though, definitely seems to see you moving into your own sound.

The band's history is really strange. In the winter of 1999, I got really obsessed with the kind of music we've been talking about. I made a record by myself and it

some 3000 miles away the next day?" It was totally crazy and totally funny but such a positive experience. So all of a sudden, it was time to do a new record. For two years, we were on the road. Sometimes it would be like a three-piece band, because Kelly couldn't sing, or other people couldn't come because we didn't have any money. It was like three revved-up boys in a van and the music turned out to be more rock'n'roll. We'd be on tour and listening to the Sonics and the Greenhornes and then play this fired-up, ridiculous show. Our live show carries a rock torch the records don't necessarily touch.

going to be famous." On *Every Night*, I was thinking about that a lot. I'd see a lot of smarmy hipsters and it was like watching *Decline of Western Civilization: the Metal Years*. There was such a solid scene where everyone was like, "No, I'm gonna fucking make it. Hollywood Skullcrash, that's my band." And I'd see the same thing at the bars in Detroit. Here was a bunch of kids who, two years ago, their favorite band was Karate, and now they were all about the Kinks. I didn't want to be like that; I didn't want to be the kid in the thrift store with a leather jacket trying to look dirty.



**"I HATE TO GO SEE A BAND
THAT SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE THEIR ALBUMS.
IT'S BORING TO ME."**

17 18 19 **20** 21 22 **23** 24 25 26 27

The song, "When the Party's Over," you seem to be commenting on people who are 25 and think they've seen it all, but in the end, it's still very hopeful. I think it's so easy to scream and criticize, but you seem to want to address these things in an affirming way.

Through everything, there is hope. It sounds corny, but's true. Most of the times you feel bad is because you've acted out of fear or selfishness. Everyone's afraid sometimes, everyone's selfish sometimes, I'm terrified all the time. I'd really love for people to hear this band and to think

that you can find joy outside of your own skull someday. I spent a lot of time writing songs about how there weren't enough vegan options at the restaurant, and maybe that is a big deal, and I've written other songs about friends of mine who were really dealing with drugs, which is valid, but there are bigger concerns too.

What's out of the ordinary is that so many modern bands are afraid of expressing an emotion like that because it's going to be seen as corny. It's so fucking easy to be negative and critical.

I was hanging out with a friend of mine the

other day and he's a little bit crazy. We were in his room and he was like, "I have this picture of you that I took when I was a lot younger and here it is in this frame. You've always been older than me and super-nice and I really look up to you a whole lot." It was nice to hear that, instead of some bullshit and trying not to tell you how they actually feel. It was so fucking bold and cool. When was the last time someone was like, "Hey, I like you. You're my friend. I think you're a good person and I'm not afraid to talk about it." ©

Matt Fagan

By his own admission, cartoonist and writer Matt Fagan is “an underground press addict.” A regular reviewer for *Xerography Debt* and proud employee of Chicago’s comics/DVD store *Brainstorm*, Fagan is the creator of *Meniscus*, a zine he proclaims is “dedicated to upholding the rights of the ugly—but not the stupid.”

Fagan started the hilarious *Meniscus* a decade ago, just before leaving Oregon for graduate school in Chicago. A few years later, two characters from a novel he’d been working on snuck into his drawings and have dominated his creative energies since in the self-published comic series *Love*. Jack and Pokie are lovers and also the most refreshingly non-stereotypical gay guys you’re likely to meet in a comic, on TV, or even on the dance floor for that matter. *Bitch* magazine says *Love* “ring[s] true in dialogue, timing, everything.”

Fagan’s short fiction has appeared in *McSweeney’s*, *Thought Magazine*, and *Little Engines*. He also pens the hilarious comic, *Hobbeson & Chives—Crimefighting Butlers in Love and Battle*.

Punk Planet caught up with Matt Fagan via email this fall to talk about not (yet) becoming a world-famous novelist, the indisputable merits of queer punkdom, and where Pokie got his name.

Interview by **Meg Daly**



In *Meniscus*, you write about the evolution you’ve gone through in creating zines: from it being a frantic, impassioned side thing you did when writing fiction was what you *really* wanted to do, to now when the comics and zines—especially *Love*—are the real work, and you’re not doing much fiction writing. Does this evolution surprise you?

The evolution is *always* surprising because I never know what direction I’m heading, but over time I’ve started learning not to panic when such an evolution takes place. In real life, though, my interests and creative impulses tend to change and cycle. I might spend a year painting, or performing at open mics, or building giant papier-mache masks. Years ago, this terrified me, and I’d wring my hands and wonder *what have I become?* But now, I’m old enough to know that even if I’m doing something new, the *change* isn’t new, and I always emerge from a phase like that as a stronger person. And I tend to pick up some skills along the way. ¶ What is especially surprising about my zine and comics work is the sheer longevity. When I printed my very first zine (about 11 years ago now) I could never have guessed that I would still be making them in my 30s, or that I would find a community through this activity. I’ve been making zines for a third of my life now (the best and most interesting third, by far), and that has really shaped and changed me as a person.

What can comics do that fiction can’t, both for you internally and in terms of the stories you want to tell?

The dominance of comics in my creative life is just the newest development, and it’s one that I have finally embraced. The *Love* comics got their start when I was in college, where I wrote a novel as my thesis. Pokie and Jack were secondary characters in that novel, and I always had a particular fondness for them. Later, I wrote a short story that picked up their relationship a few months after the end of the book, and writing that story reminded me of how much I liked those characters. Three years ago, I was jonesing for them again, so I drew a one-page comic just to see how they were doing. ¶ It was really one of those split-second decisions that have unpredictable, far-reaching ramifications. I’d created a single-page format for this comic and slapped the title *Love* at the top because I needed a name. And now I have about 150 of those pages! ¶ As a writer, I tend to spend a lot of time planning out my stories before I get down to the nuts and bolts of writing them. But the *Love* comics allowed me to build an entire world out of these little glimpses, anecdotes, and story fragments. The story developed more organically than my normal process would have allowed. I began with characters that I already knew, who had a history I’d established through my fiction writing, so I was very comfortable working with them

in this new medium. ¶ I feel like comics are really the right way to go with Jack and Pokie, because these guys have always had an absurd edge to them. You can get away with a much more whimsical tone in comics than you can in fiction—you can interrupt a serious plot-line with a flight of fancy and not come off as being schizophrenic. Also, as an artist, it's refreshing to be able to take a break like that. Sometimes I want to be playing in Jack and Pokie's world but I don't feel like working on the *story*. If I were writing a novel, the result of that impulse would be a scene that needs to be cut *because it doesn't serve the story*. But in comics, you can do almost anything.

With comics, you can ensure that your audience gets to know your characters in a different way because we literally see Jack and Pokie and their wonderful expressions—I'm thinking of all of Pokie's different outfits when he's applying for jobs!

Thank you! I always hope it's working, but it can be hard to tell.

I'm inspired by the way you seem to just give yourself over to whatever genre is wanting to surface in you. Has the desire for fame or other outward markers of success ever been a stumbling block? How much do you care about making a name for yourself?

I'd be lying if I said I *didn't* care. There's a part of me that always imagined I would go to college and then just become a famous novelist—not through effort, but because it was inevitable. And then when that didn't happen (as the wiser part of me always knew it wouldn't), I had to reassess my motivations. I am still sure that being famous would be pretty cool, and I would absolutely love to try it sometime. But I had to admit that I would be doing this stuff whether or not the projects were leading to any kind of exterior goal. ¶ Plus, I think there is a way in which fame would be limiting. It sounds a little corny (and far too much like the moral of a road movie), but you come to realize that it's the journey that matters and not the destination. I mean, we all wind up at the same destination, rotting in the ground. What the hell kind of goal is that?

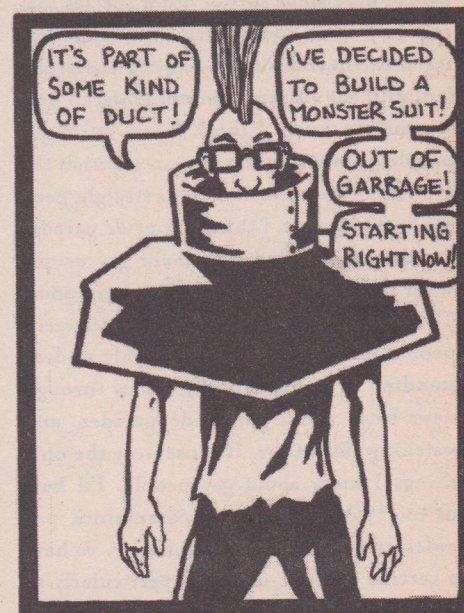
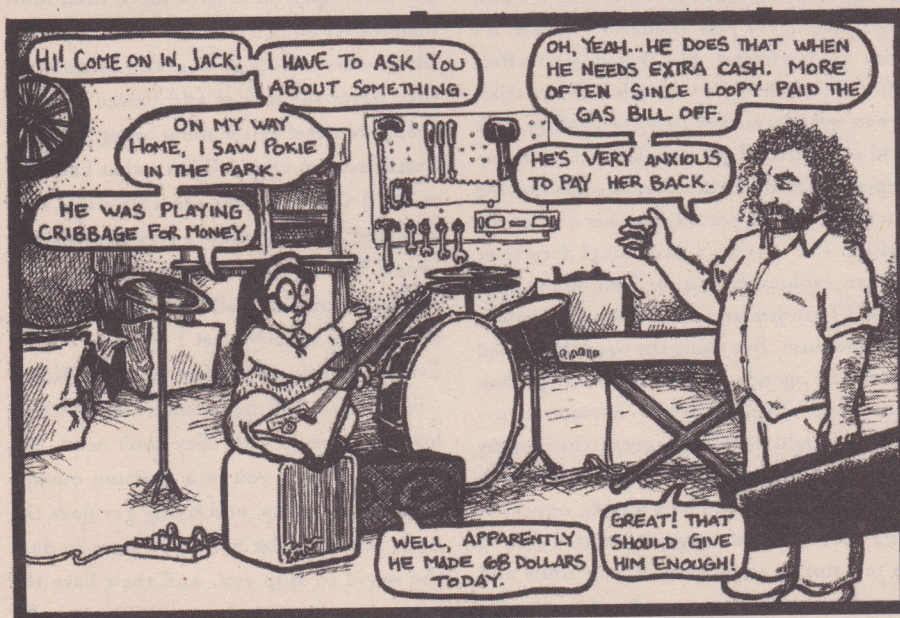
I gotta ask: Where did the name Pokie come from?

This will probably sound pretty silly. As I mentioned before, Jack and Pokie originated in a novel I wrote for college. Pokie was the main character's best friend and roommate, and his introduction to the story was a scene in which the protagonist accidentally ate some dosed Halloween candy and kind of freaked out, so he called his roommate to come and walk him home. ¶ I had an idea of who the roommate was, but I was more interested in creating the

character by writing him than by planning him out. So the very first time that I found myself writing about this roommate was through the eyes of a protagonist who was tripping balls on acid, and he was a product of that scene. In all honesty, the reason he was initially named Pokie is because his most prominent physical features were the metal spikes on his leather jacket and the enormous spires of his Mohawk. I imagined that if I was on acid and I looked at this man, I would feel like I was in danger of being poked. ¶ It's goofy when you hear the backstory, but the name really worked for me.

One of the things I love about your characters is that they seem like real people. They remind me of a gay male couple with whom I'm close friends who don't really fit the stereotypes of gay guys. I remember reading in *Meniscus* that one of the reasons you created *Love* was to create characters that were more like people you know—or yourself—and not mass-media produced images of gay men.

As a rule, I don't read a whole lot of "gay comics" and I don't watch "gay movies." There is this whole gay culture out there that I have no interest in being a part of, and I don't feel the need to participate in entertainment that purports to represent me just because it's filled with homos. In the past few years, though, since I've been trading zines and writing reviews for *Xe-*





"I've been making zines for a third of my life now, and that has really shaped and changed me as a person."

rography Debt, I've been exposed to quite a few comics that I might not otherwise have seen. And when I spent a little over a year working at a video store in Chicago's Boystown, I was exposed to a lot of gay movies that I *never* would have watched by choice. What became clear over time is that all of these movies and comics seemed to think of themselves as an *alternative* to normal entertainment, like a mirror image of a "real" movie or a "real" comic, produced in a gay alternate universe. But I don't come from an alternate universe! This crap did not represent *me* or anything that I could identify with. My feeling was that this gay entertainment was a supremely segregationist undertaking, declaring to the world that gay people were some sort of other species that required their own separate but equal entertainment industry. ¶ I have a *huge* problem with gay culture, I'm not going to beat around the bush. I think that a lot of gay people go out of their way to *perpetuate* the same stereotypes that nervous straight people hate them for. I think gay pride parades are disgusting, and they make gay people seem incredibly shallow and promiscuous. There are a lot of decent but backwards people in this country whose only understanding of homosexuality comes through news-bytes about gay pride parades, and watching *Will & Grace*. If those were the only things I knew about gay people, I'd hate us too. ¶ Within the gay community, parades and clubs and ghettoization *do* have a certain amount of value, particularly to young people who are just coming out of a

bad situation and trying to find a place to belong, where they can get a grip on who they are. I understand that and I wouldn't want to take that experience away. But in the long run, circuit parties and all-night bars and obnoxious displays of hot-pants are not going to make anyone a better, happier person, and I was getting sick of seeing those things held up as the emblem of "what it means to be gay." ¶ In real life in American society, being gay is political. For the time being, that is just an inescapable truth. But I have no intention of living my life that way. Being gay is *what* I am, not *who* I am. I'm also Cherokee and hazel-eyed and a little pudgy around the middle. But I don't go around making some big deal about *those* things. I'm a writer. I'm a cartoonist. I also enjoy having sex and whenever I have it, it's with my boyfriend, but that doesn't affect me as an artist. ¶ I'm offended when artists create gay characters that are shallow, safe and clownish. If gay people want to be accepted as normal, they should stop allowing themselves to be portrayed otherwise in the media. The first few *Love* comics I drew were just an exploration, to see what would happen if I translated those characters into a new medium. But along the way I developed a definite agenda, aside from telling a fun story. Since I had these two characters, guys that I thought were pretty great (the best gay couple I can think of, besides the one I'm a part of), I felt like I had a terrific opportunity to demonstrate *my* gay lifestyle. I wanted to tell stories about people with souls and mundane problems, people who struggle

and worry and overreact but, at the end of the day, really love each other.

What is your relationship to punk gay identity?

I've never really belonged to an easily classifiable social group, but punks are the only group for whom I've ever felt a strong kinship. I really enjoy punk music, though I don't go to shows. And on a basic animal level, punks are very attractive to me. But the die-hard punks I know are some of the happiest people I've ever met. They make art and music and are never afraid of chaos, and when they die there might not be any record of their lives at all. But I'll bet they enjoy those lives more than most people ever do. ¶ There are so many people who live their lives in fear, and I think that they strive for money and power to make themselves feel better about being helpless. Punks are not afraid. That's what I admire most. ¶ Queer punks are a peculiar animal, and I think it takes a very strong sense of self. When I created Pokie, I didn't know any queer punks at all. Now I know a few, and they're exactly what I'd always hoped. Every queer punk I've met has been funny and fearless, willing to embrace what they love and give up what they don't need. Being a punk puts you in a position outside of normal society, and being gay does the same thing. To be both, you have to dare the world to stop you, and then have the balls to stand up to the world if it tries. ©

**"I'd encourage publishers to
find other sources of cash."**

**—Cheryl Woodard,
Independent Press Association Board Treasurer,
on the future of Indy Press Newsstand Services
(*Punk Planet's* newsstand distributor)**

Since shortly after the last presidential elections, Punk Planet's Community-Supported Journalism fund has been helping us give you great content, like our expansive PP69 cover feature "The End of Radio".

Yet in late October, 2005, we received word that our distributor was having trouble paying the titles it represented. For a magazine like Punk Planet, which relies heavily on money from newsstand sales to continue printing, this could have spelled the end in no time.

We sent out an alert to subscribers and fans, who kicked in small CSJ donations immediately—\$10 here, \$20 there, a whopping \$100 every once in awhile—so we can make sure our contributors get paid, even in the midst of possible financial doom.

To all those that made contributions, we thank you. And to all those that enjoy the writing that appears in Punk Planet every issue, our CSJ fund is a wonderful way of directly supporting those writers that made it possible. Please consider donating.

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AMY GOODMAN DEMOCRACY NOW

Amy Goodman was beaten by Indonesian soldiers during the occupation of East Timor after watching them gun down 270 innocents. She interviewed political prisoners and exposed a major oil company's role in the death of two dissenting Nigerians. She hosted an uncompromising impromptu interview with then-President Bill Clinton in 2000 that further cemented her reputation in indie media circles. And she's done it all while running one of the most well-respected and influential progressive news programs on the radio, *Democracy Now!*

The show's host and executive producer, Goodman began in community radio in 1985 at Pacifica Radio's New York Station, WBAI. During the 1996 presidential race, Goodman's show became the only daily election show on public broadcasting, and when the election was over it moved far beyond its original intentions. Almost a decade later, *Democracy Now!* now calls itself the "only public media program in the country that airs on radio, satellite and cable television, shortwave radio, and the Internet."

Over the years, Goodman has become a radical "brand" unto herself, having co-authored the book *The Exception to the Rule: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media that Love Them* and taken part in hundreds of appearances at conferences, commencements, protests, and other events.

Goodman spoke to *Punk Planet* about the need for independent media and her show's approaching 10-year anniversary from the road on her way to a community radio "barnraising" in Northampton, Mass.

Interview by **Ashley St. Pierre**

Give me a snapshot of what is actually on your mind right now: What do think is important?

Actually, today is a very significant day. For one, it's the 40th anniversary of the voting rights act and it's also the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. This just happens to be the day we're talking. I've done a lot of investigating on the dropping of the atomic bomb, the first and only time they used it, and how it was covered by the media. We just did a piece in the *Baltimore Sun* yesterday, calling for the stripping of the Pulitzer Prize from the *New York Times* and the reporter William Laurence because Laurence, who did a series of 10 pieces on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the dawn of the nuclear age, was also on the payroll of the US government at the same time that he was reporting for the *Times*. In the series he downplayed the effects of radiation, and this really affected the way coverage was done for years to come. ¶ Meanwhile, you had George Weller, a *Chicago Daily News* reporter, who was the first western reporter there, do a 25,000 word piece that was stopped: US military censors took the piece and prevented it from being published. It was only recently found, rediscovered, and released. In it, George Weller talked about this "disease X"—there weren't even words to describe the effects of radiation and how people were suffering. ¶ Wilfred Burchett was an independent reporter who made it to Hiroshima, as well. He didn't even have words to describe it either. He talked about a "bomb sickness"; he talked about an "atomic plague." And he sat down in the rubble with a typewriter and tapped out the words: "I write this as a warning to the world." ¶ The war department—it wasn't called the Pentagon yet—was trying to deal with the effects of this report, and so they called a group of reporters to counter the charges of radia-

tion killing people. William Laurence was the leader of this group of reporters and he put out the series that won the Pulitzer for his reporting. So we believe, given that he was on the payroll not only of the *Times* but also of the war department, that he should be stripped of his Pulitzer.

That's some heavy stuff, do you think it will really happen?

We'll see. We're calling on the Pulitzer Board to strip the *Times*, or for the *Times* to give it up voluntarily.

Do you see a parallel between that sort of thing then and now?

I think it's a very important question. I think the embedding process today—the embedded reporters—has led to an all-time low for the media in this country. We need a media that's separate from the government, not just parroting the line. George Bush could not have invaded Iraq alone: He needed to manufacture consent from the American public. If he stood on the steps of the White House with a little megaphone and said, "Weapons of mass destruction, weapons of mass destruction," maybe some people would have believed it, but he had something more powerful than any bomb, than any missile: the US media. The unforgivable reporting of people like Judith Miller of the *New York Times*. Her reporting leading up to the war was unforgivable. The regular pieces that appeared consistently in the *New York Times* over and over again alleging weapons of mass destruction which were based on anonymous sources that really beat the drums for war. It all turns out it wasn't true, and most people wouldn't have believed it if it weren't for what the US media did.



PEOPLE BECOME CONVINCED BASED ON WHAT THEY HEAR, SEE AND READ. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS OVER AND OVER AGAIN. IT'S NOT THAT PEOPLE ARE STUPID; IT'S THAT THEY ARE GOOD MEDIA CONSUMERS.

How would you have covered the war if there were no rules or boundaries?

We do a daily, grassroots global news hour, we broadcast on over 350 stations around the country and the world. We do it every day. We bring out the voices of dissent in this country and around the world, and those voices are not just representing a fringe minority. They are a silent majority—a *silence* majority. We're talking about people in high levels of intelligence and military as well as low-level soldiers. The majority of people in this country are opposed to this war, and that is very significant, and yet we rarely hear these voices in the media. ¶ It's fine for there to be reporters who are embedded in the front lines of the troops, but we also need reporters embedded in Iraq's hospitals and communities, and peace movements around the world. We need a full picture of the effects of this war.

And you don't think that the embedded reporters are delivering that?

They're embedded in the front lines of the troops; they are bringing us this one perspective. You can't just have the perspective from the trigger end—war is more than that.

Why do you think there *isn't* more reporting from hospitals and smaller villages? Is it just the path of least resistance to go along with the Pentagon's embedding process or do you think that media organizations are scared to venture outside the lines?

Media has become a fourth arm of government, and it's a very big problem. We are essential to the functioning of a democratic society. What is essential about the media is that it is independent, that it does independent investigation. ¶ Sure, we've seen reporters doing very good jobs questioning Scott McLellan, the White House press secretary, about who leaked the identity of an undercover CIA operative named Valerie Plame.

Perhaps that's a new trend in this group, to ask real questions?

Asking questions about Karl Rove, asking questions about Scooter Libby, we see them pile on McLellan. But what about two years ago when the Bush administration was falsely alleging weapons of mass destruction? Where were the reporters then? Where were the reporters piling on and demanding to know who the sources were, what the evidence for *that* was? ¶ I think the media is one of the most powerful institutions on earth right now. They are determining the way we see the world, the way others view us around the world. And journalists do shape the story: They're the lens through which others view us—the lens in which we view each other—so it's very important that journalists become accountable. And of course if journalists are doing a good job then they're holding their government accountable and the government will start being very concerned about what reporters are doing and what they're reporting.

The media is obviously different now than two years ago, let alone 10 or 20 years ago. You've been part of the media for a while. Has there been big changes in the time you've been involved? Are people not listening to real media anymore?

I think they are listening, watching, and reading the media—and it is putting out false information. You can't have a media that continually alleges weapons of mass destruction for two years without having an effect. People become convinced based on what they hear, see and read. That's what happens over and over again. It's not that people are stupid; it's that they are good media consumers.

But they're just consuming media that is misleading them?

Absolutely.

Do you see any up-and-coming media outlets or sources that you think can get a foothold

and rise up to the point where people are listening to it with more of a serious ear than they would, say, FOX or CNN?

I think *Democracy Now!* is having a tremendous effect. We started as a community radio broadcast in 1996, 10 years ago. Around September 11, we moved to television as well, and we are now broadcasting on 350 TV and radio stations, increasingly on NPR and PBS stations, on the satellite networks . . . broadcasting across Australia, across Canada, and in Europe. The fact that so many stations pick us up every week is really, I think, a testament to the hunger for independent voices. We have a larger audience than even CNN does. We are part of an independent media movement in the country. I think we have to build up independent media and we have to compete with the corporate media. ¶ I've been doing journalism for many years, since I was in high school. I've been at Pacifica for more than 20 years. I see it as an awesome responsibility to provide this forum, to get different voices out to people all over the world, particularly people who are not heard in other media—which is a *majority* of people. It is absolutely essential that they have a voice, because, well you know the quote from Martin Niemöller from World War II: "First they came for the communists, and I wasn't a communist so I didn't speak up. Then they came for the socialists, and I wasn't a socialist so I didn't speak up. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I wasn't a trade unionist so I didn't speak up. Then they came for the Jews and Catholics, and I was neither so I didn't speak up. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak up." It is absolutely important that the media be a watchdog; that the media provide a forum for discussion, for our freedom, about peace in the world and about how people at a grassroots level are working very hard for peace. ©

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...THE BEAT GOES ON

KILLING THE DREAM

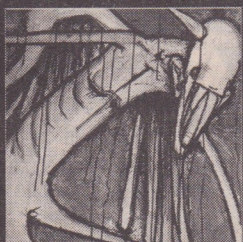
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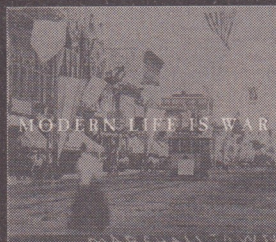
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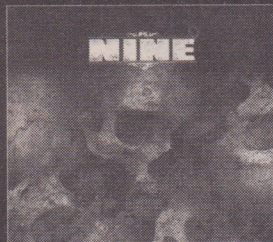
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SIEG HOWDY, PARDNERS!



For those of you still reeling in the wake of *Never Breathe What You Can't See*, here's some more! Further off the deep end and more Melvinoid this time, **Jello Biafra and the Melvins** serve up six more studio tracks (including a cover of **Alice Cooper's** "Halo of Flies"), remixes by **Al Jourgensen**, **Dalek**, and the **Deaf Nephews**, and to top it off: an all-new live version of the DKlassic "Kali-fornia Über Alles" – this time about the gubernator, Schwarzenegger himself – and not a moment too soon! Featuring killer artwork by Camille Rose Garcia! Say it loud, say it proud – "Sieg Howdy!"

JELLO BIAFRA WITH THE MELVINS **SIEG HOWDY!**

F-MINUS

WONT BLEED ME / FAILED SOCIETY

Two EPs and unreleased cover songs comprise this essential album of no-bullshit Hardcore from scene veterans F-Minus. 20 songs of in-your-face, to-the-point, straightforward HC blasts! Featuring Brad from Leftöver Crack, the band employs a killer two-pronged, male/female vocal assault that gets their point across loud and clear!

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Vic Bondi of Articles of Faith and ex-Jawbox member and producer extraordinaire J. Robbins join forces to forge RSA from unadulterated anger and politically-charged venom. Punishing grooves, a few post-Hardcore elements, and raw, honest, energy coalesce into a massive album that demands to be heard.



Tarantella.

Esqueletos

From the fertile breeding ground of Denver, Colorado, comes Tarantella. A heady mix of spaghetti western twang, south American mystique, gritty Americana and lush, seductive female vocals, Tarantella sounds like the soundtrack to a movie that would be fucking awesome.

Featuring former and current members of I6 Horsepower, Slim Cessna's Auto Club, Woven Hand, Lillium, and Blood Axis.



I6HORSEPOWER



Olden

From the Rocky Mountain state of Colorado comes "the best band my home state ever produced," according to Jello Biafra. Finally available again, these two albums are essential listening. Somewhere between alt-country, dark Americana, blues, and... a lot of other stuff, I6 HP may no longer be a band, but their music survives them via these mandatory reissues.



Hoarse

turn me on dead man god bless the electric freak

TMODM meld mind-altering psych and mind-numbing heaviness into a musical cocktail of extreme rock that combines everything that kicks ass and leaves out anything that doesn't. "God Bless the Electric Freak" is a lysergic spectacle of feedback-drenched aural decadence!

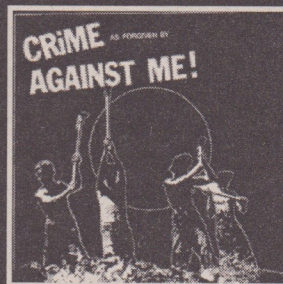
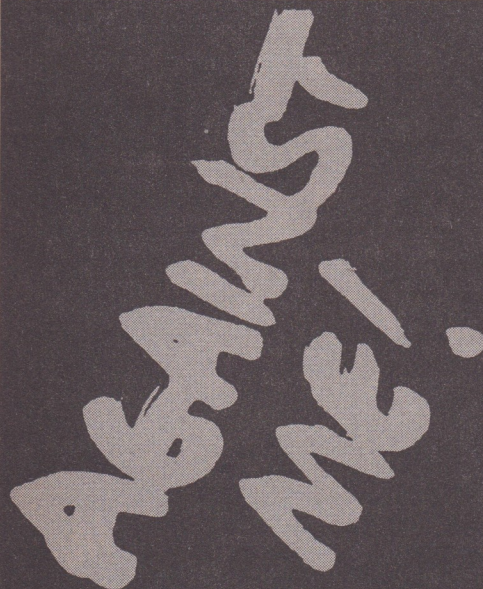


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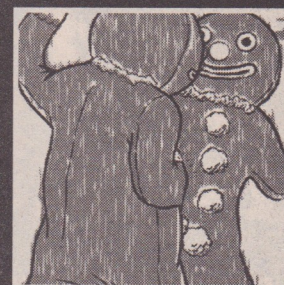
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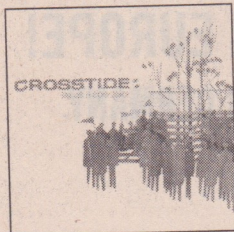
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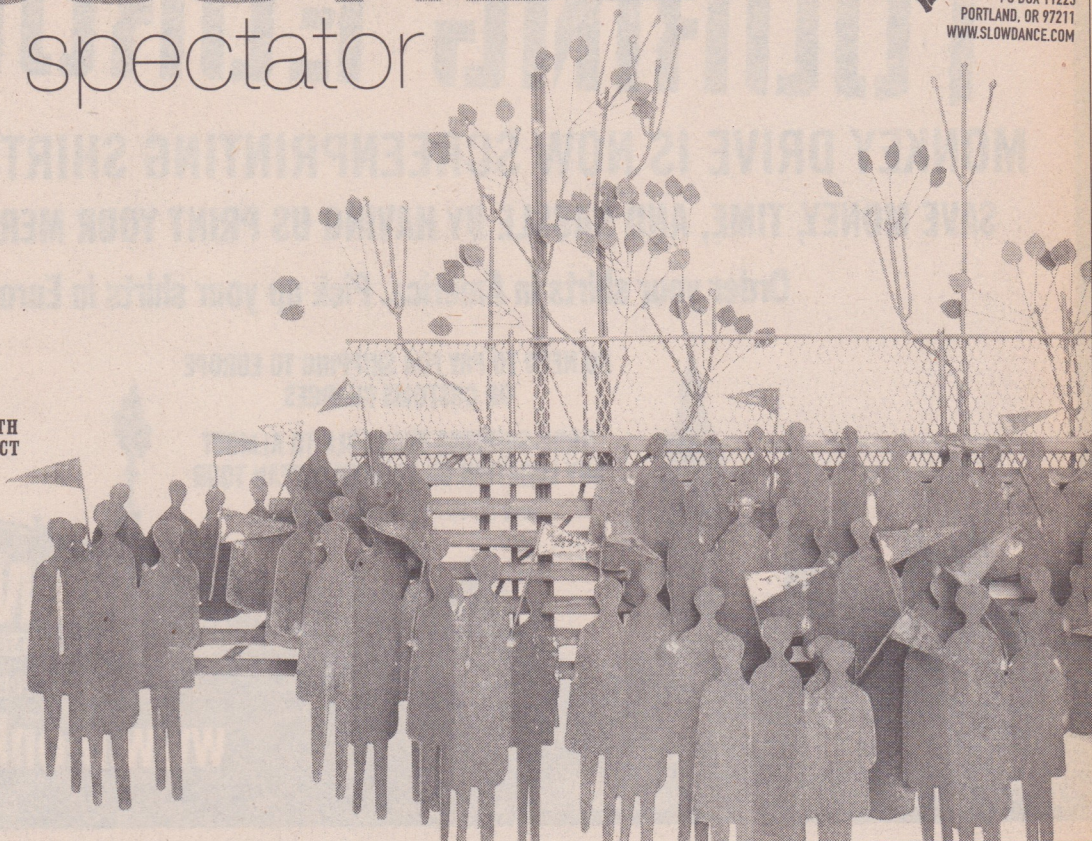


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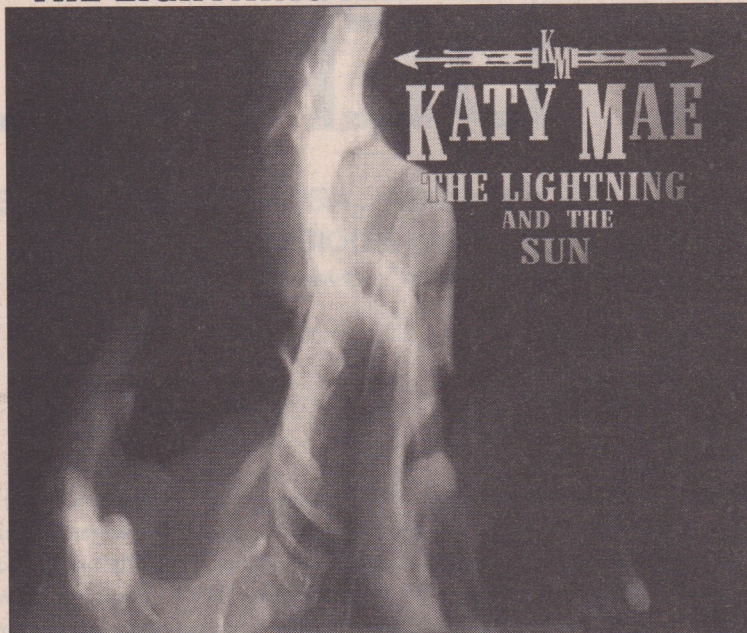
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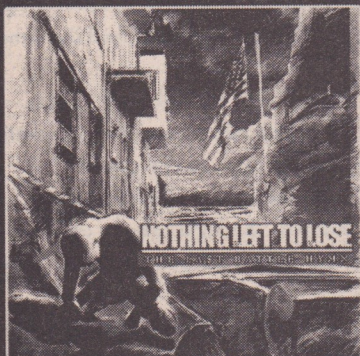
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STATE OF DENIAL

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, RESTRICTIONS TO SAFE AND LEGAL ABORTION CONTINUE TO MOUNT. HAVE WOMEN LOST CONTROL OF THEIR OWN BODIES?

"American women are drowning in a sea of state and federal laws restricting abortion." —*Prochoiceactionnetwork-canada.org*

The most visible threat to abortion rights for American women today is the potential of the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*, thanks to a conservative administration packing the bench with conservative judges like newly-minted Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Associate Justice nominee Samuel A. Alito, Jr. An upcoming abortion case to be argued before the court on November 30, *Ayotte vs. Planned Parenthood et al.*, seems likely to be overturned at first glance—it concerns a law lacking exception for a woman's health. Yet the truth is that in many states, obtaining a safe, legal abortion is a challenge akin to passing the bar for the women who need it most. You'd never know it in Seattle, San Francisco, or New York City, but around the country, ever since *Roe vs. Wade* (1973) and particularly since *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey* (1992), states have been restricting access to abortion incrementally via new laws and constitutional amendments—yet women continue to find ways to end unwanted pregnancies thanks to sometimes quiet but consistently strong support from pro-choice supporters. Now, the *Ayotte* case could impede women's ability to fight dangerous laws before they're faced with untenable options, in spite of more than 30 years of precedent otherwise.

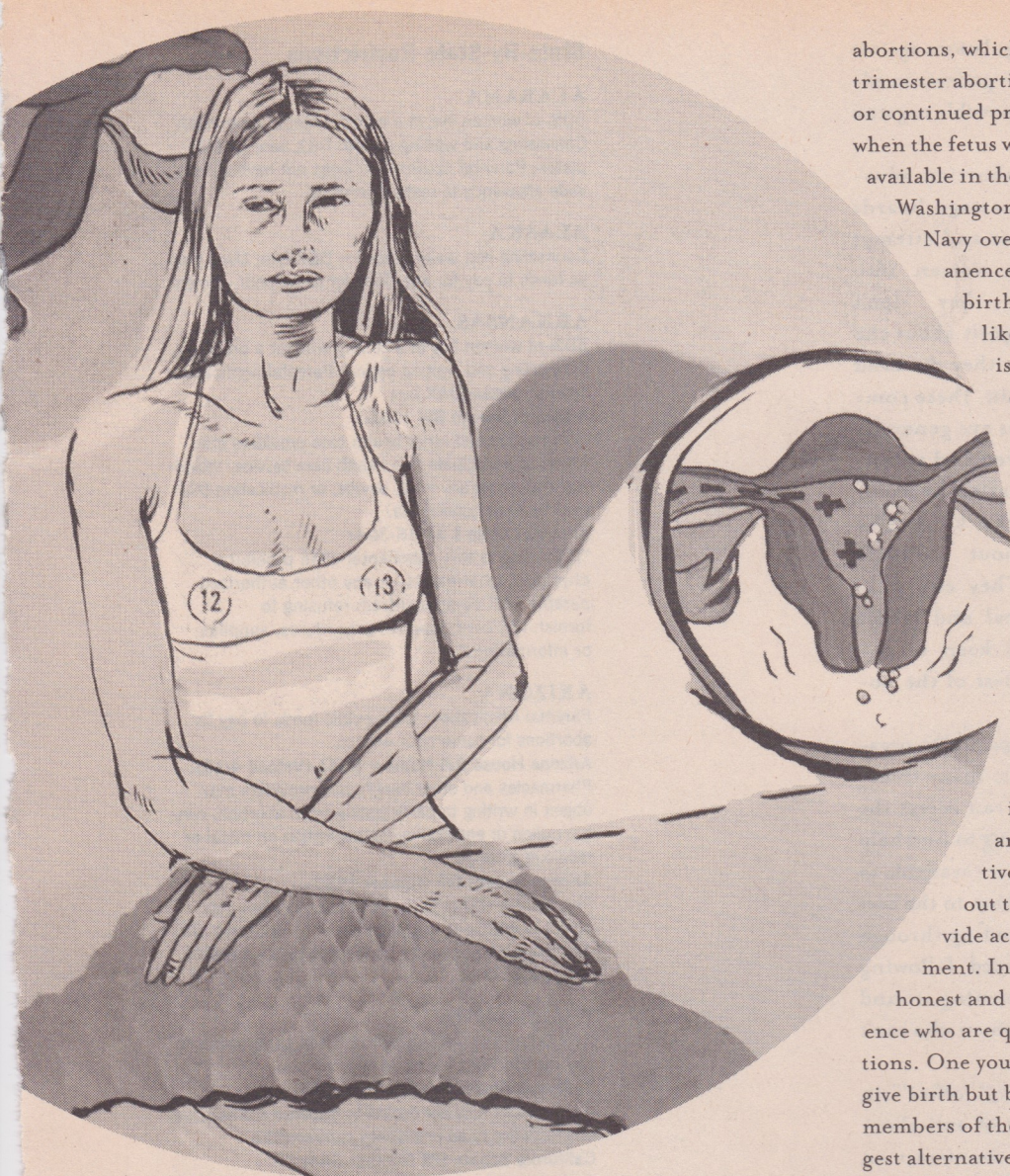
Roe vs. Wade was argued on the notion that abortion was a private choice and therefore constitutionally protected. At the time, it was considered a compromise: most staunch reproductive health advocates argued vociferously for all laws regulating access to women's health procedures and information be struck down entirely. With *Roe*, the Supreme Court said it is a woman's right to end a pregnancy before fetal viability with a doctor's help depending on the developmental stage of the fetus. In the decades leading up to the 1970's, birth control advocates faced laws prohibiting the dispersal of birth control to unmarried women as well as mailing any information about birth control. Immediate results of *Roe vs. Wade* were obvious: the number of hospital admissions and deaths related to pregnancy complications plummeted. Anti-abortion activists promptly fought back, making

significant incremental inroads against women's reproductive rights. In the early years, anti-abortion workers managed to ensure federal funding for reproductive health care would explicitly not pay for abortion (the 1980 Hyde Amendment to Title X, the reproductive health funding bill), and even not flow to clinics that provide abortions or referrals to clinics or hospitals that perform the procedures. Over 20 years, a continual press for restrictions ended in victory with the 1992 Supreme Court decision that allowed anti-abortion legislators to pile on limitations, roadblocks, and restrictions to abortion. In *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*, the Supreme Court determined that any action or law that did not create an "undue burden" upon a woman's ability to manage her own body was legal.

What constitutes an undue burden to a Supreme Court justice, however, is vastly different from that of a poor woman in Mississippi, one of the most difficult states in which to obtain an abortion, or a US soldier or wife overseas in, say, Iraq or Afghanistan. A 30-something white woman in a non-abusive relationship might have a hard time getting multiple days off work for the multiple appointments necessary for mandatory counseling and waiting periods, but it's not necessarily an "undue burden." A younger woman, perhaps living on a reservation or in a town hours from the nearest clinic (86 percent of counties in the US are without a provider), would likely find the same restrictions far more burdensome.

Imagine, for example, a 17-year-old in Lubbock, Texas, a town with abstinence-only sexual health education in the schools and one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country, worrying she's pregnant, even though she took a chastity pledge in front of her parents. For such women, the legal tangle, on top of the emotional issues and day-to-day time management issues, may seem insurmountable.

The list of restrictions includes but is not limited to: state mandated counseling; waiting periods that require a woman to make return appointments on separate days; bans on public funding for abortions, which can include any clinic that provides abortions or related



services, and often means public hospitals do not provide abortions; hospital mergers with Catholic-run institutions; fake or bad science; abstinence-only education; special anti-abortion funds; social stigmatization of abortion at the legislative level; fear-mongering by the FDA on emergency contraception; fake investigations like that by Mark Crutcher's Life Dynamics of Denton, TX, which claimed there are "baby body parts for sale;" laws and websites claiming their anti-abortion mission is "pedophile protection;" "fetal protection acts" that engender human rights to the fetus, making injuring a fetus manslaughter or murder; communities that boycott construction companies contracted to build clinics; laws that demand "personhood" for fetuses; and more. Nearly 500 state laws and constitutional amendments restrict abortion and maternal choice at press time; California, for example, is set to vote on a constitutional amendment granting personhood to the fetus in the next general election.

In terms of the medical risk to the woman's body, abortion is safer than childbirth, but this is not a fight over practicality. Studies demonstrate that limitations on abortions mostly force later

abortions, which are more expensive and more dangerous. Third trimester abortions are usually only available in cases where birth or continued pregnancy represents danger to a woman's health or when the fetus will not survive childbirth. Federal funding is only available in the former case or in cases of rape or incest; a young

Washington woman recently lost an appealed case against the Navy over payment for abortion of a fetus diagnosed with anencephaly, severe brain damage that results in stillbirth. She now owes the Navy \$3000, which she is not likely to be able to pay. Medically speaking, abortion is also likely to be safer than pregnancy—the stress of pregnancy shows up in statistics of increased violence against pregnant women, especially young and/or black women. If well-intentioned, these laws could serve an important purpose to safeguard the lives of women. But an administration that refuses to sign an international statement of women's rights because it acknowledges women's sexual rights is not working in the best interests of women anywhere.

The biggest abortion rights resource: the Internet

In a search for safe abortion information online, it's all too easy to find sites posing as real research and offering "compelling" emotionally manipulative anti-abortion stories—but good information is out there, and there are many women working to provide accurate information in a harassment-free environment. In these environments, young women are able to be honest and receive support from women with more experience who are quite willing to help another consider all her options. One young woman, for example, had originally wanted to give birth but became extremely depressed and decided to abort; members of the community gathered virtually around her to suggest alternatives and ask her about her situation to help find the best course of action for her, rather than demand she go immediately to a clinic or the nearest Catholic church.

The websites break down the walls of shame and fear, enabling women to see their own situation for what it is and face their available choices. Another young woman posted initially inquiring how to obtain an abortion without her parents finding out. Over a two-week period, she decided she would have to talk to her mother and eventually was able to do so.

Online communities help offset the official roadblocks. State-mandated counseling is designed to dissuade women from having abortions by describing abortion in hyperbolic, negative terms; it can include fetal development photos, descriptions of the "baby," statements that life begins at conception and warnings of severe post-procedure depression and regret. It does not require that doctors offer possible benefits: that abortion is many times safer than childbirth, particularly for teenagers, and that it can change women's lives for the better. Instead, that comes from other women online (imnotsorry.net and livejournal.com/community/imnotsorry). Stories are unvarnished and include painful details of the struggles before, during,

and after the procedure. Currently, there are no regulations against doctors and providers sharing this information with patients in addition to mandatory statements stressing minutely possible negative affects of abortion.

Although debate runs rampant and anti-abortion advocates regularly troll message boards and blogs to harass and attempt to manipulate women into pregnancies they don't want and guilt about the abortions they do need and obtain, these communities are generally monitored and voluntarily staffed by women in the know who care about women's health. They cite reliable medical and media sources and keep up-to-date with the best of the political bloggers.

"The anti-abortion group was pretty rattled by the understanding that their presence was paying for abortions."

In addition to organically organized web communities, several professional sites, many inter-linked, provide support services online. Women can access the National Network of Abortion Funds at www.nnaf.org to find help to pay abortion costs. In some states, private funds are available to cover travel, housing, meals and childcare in addition to the cost of the medical procedure. One group offering funding through NNAF, Counter Crisis (countercrisis.org), formed following the 2004 March for Women's Lives and works by turning around small donations—\$10 and \$20 at a time—to help women who can't afford abortion services.

Dori Lanni runs Counter Crisis out of "a 3x5' 'office'" in her apartment; the organization turns the tactics of anti-abortion protestors into fundraisers for choice. To counteract an anti-choice protest on a local college campus, Counter Crisis sponsored a "pledge-a-picket," a concept successfully employed by Planned Parenthood. Donors pledged a dollar amount for every hour the anti-choice protestors held up their "giant fetus pictures and bibles" on the Los Angeles campus.

"We raised enough money that day to fund a current client and the next," says Lanni. "The anti-abortion group was pretty rattled by the understanding that their presence was paying for abortions."

For Lanni, "the 2000 campaign and anticipated Supreme Court threat moved me to switch my activism focus to abortion rights." Though she says that major events in the media prompt a few new orders for "Mamas for Choice" T-shirts, she does not see a major influx of funds. But, she states, "current political and legislative threats certainly give rise to underground groups. Women will always seek abortions, and there will always be other women to help them."

Currently, Counter Crisis offers direct funding but is not eligible for infrastructure or other grants since it lacks 501(c)(3) status—which limits the political activity an organization can per-

State-By-State Restrictions

ALABAMA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; License plates; Parental notification; Does not have state-wide allowance to restrict services

ALASKA

Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

ARKANSAS

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; Parental notification; License plates; D&X ban

Arkansas Senate Bill 1141:

Pharmacists and other health care providers may refuse to participate in a health care service, including dispensing any drug, device, or medication that violates their conscience.

Arkansas Code § 20-16-304:

"[N]othing in this subchapter shall prohibit a physician, pharmacist, or any other authorized paramedical personnel from refusing to furnish any contraceptive procedures, supplies, or information."

ARIZONA

Parental notification; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

Arizona House Bill Number 2541 (Vetoed 4/13):

Pharmacies and other health care providers may object in writing to participating in an abortion, contraception or emergency contraception on moral or religious grounds.

Arizona Senate Bill Number 1485:

Pharmacies and other health care providers may object in writing to participating in an abortion, contraception or emergency contraception on moral or religious grounds.

CALIFORNIA

Counseling and waiting period; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

California Assembly Bill Number 21:

A pharmacist may not decline to dispense a prescribed contraceptive or an emergency contraceptive.

California Senate Bill Number 644:

A pharmacist must dispense a lawful prescription unless it is contraindicated for the patient or it is not in stock at the pharmacy. If the prescribed product is not in stock, the pharmacist must take steps to try to ensure that the patient has timely access to the prescribed medication at another pharmacy.

COLORADO

Parental notification; Totally restricts insurance funding for abortion

CONNECTICUT

Counseling and waiting period; License plates

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DELAWARE

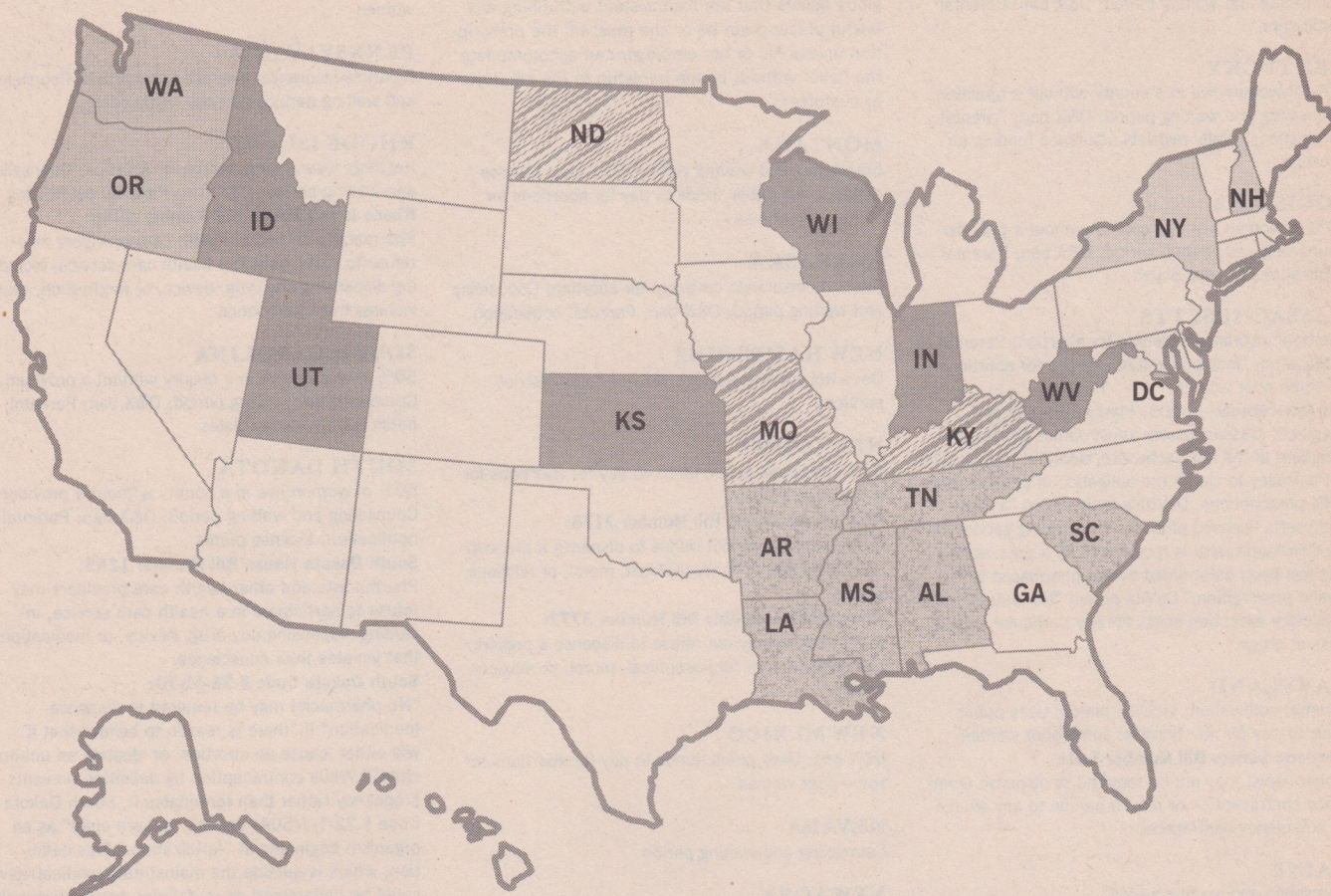
Counseling and waiting period; Parental notification

FLORIDA





Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; License plates; Constitutional amendment re: life

GEORGIA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period, Parental notification; D&X ban



States with highest and least number of abortion restrictions

	For all of these states, more than 50% of women live in counties with no abortion provider, and state laws include counseling and/or waiting periods.		Restricts private and/or state employee insurance payments for abortion procedures.
	Sells or has attempted to sell license plates are sold to fund pro-life initiatives. Several courts have declared the sale of such plates unconstitutional unless a pro-choice alternative is also offered.		States that have no laws restricting abortion beyond federal law's viability rule. More than 50% of women live in counties with a provider.

Georgia Senate Bill 123:

A pharmacist is not required to fill a prescription for a drug "which purpose is believed by the pharmacist to have the effect or possible effect of terminating a pregnancy." Although contraceptives, including emergency contraception, do not terminate a pregnancy; the bill summary (which is prepared by the legislature) states that its purpose is to permit pharmacists to refuse "to fill a prescription for an emergency contraceptive drug which purpose is to induce and effect an abortion."

Georgia Code §480-5-.03:

The Georgia Code of Professional Conduct states that "[i]t shall not be considered unprofessional conduct for any pharmacist to refuse to fill a prescription based on his or her ethical or moral beliefs."

HAWAII

License plates; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

IDAHO

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; Parental notification; D&X ban; Restricts insurance coverage for abortion

ILLINOIS

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; D&X ban; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

- On April 1, 2005; Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich promulgated an emergency rule that requires pharmacies that sell contraceptives to fill prescriptions for birth control without delay. If the contraceptive, or a suitable alternative; is not in stock, the pharmacy must order or obtain the contraceptive or, if the patient prefers, transfer the prescription to another local pharmacy of the patient's choice or return it to the patient for filling elsewhere.

- This emergency rule was challenged in two lawsuits filed in April. The litigants are represented by

the American Center for Law & Justice, a right-wing legal advocacy organization affiliated with Pat Robertson. In one case, the court has already denied plaintiff's motion for a temporary restraining order (TRO); in the other, the State has moved to dismiss the case for lack of standing.

INDIANA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

Indiana Senate Bill Number 48:

No person may be required to dispense either: a drug that may result in, or that is intended to result in, an abortion or "artificial birth control."

IOWA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; D&X ban; Parental notification

KANSAS

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

KENTUCKY

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; Totally restricts insurance funding for abortion

LOUISIANA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; License plates

MASSACHUSETTS

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Parental notification; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

- In late February, 2003; Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts asked James DeVita, the president of the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Pharmacy to clarify the obligation of pharmacists to fill prescriptions. DeVita's reply stated "a Massachusetts licensed pharmacist providing services in the Commonwealth is required to fill a prescription that has been determined by the pharmacist to be a valid prescription." DeVita added "No statutory or regulatory exception exists for any particular drug or class of drugs."

MARYLAND

Parental notification; License plates; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women
Maryland Senate Bill Number 541:
A pharmacist may not be required to dispense emergency contraception or refer a person to any source for emergency contraception.

MAINE

Counseling and waiting period

MICHIGAN

Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

Michigan House Bill Number 4741:

"A health care provider may object as a matter of conscience to providing or participating in a health care service on ethical, moral, or religious grounds."

MINNESOTA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period, Parental notification, Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

MISSISSIPPI

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; License plates

Mississippi Code § 41-107-5:

Health care providers (including pharmacists and pharmacy employees) have the right not to participate in a health care service that violates their conscience. However, this subsection does not allow a health care provider to refuse to participate in a health care service regarding a patient because of the patient's race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, religion, creed, or sexual orientation."

MISSOURI

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification
Missouri Senate Bill Number 458:

Pharmacists have a duty to fill all lawful prescriptions properly. If a pharmacist holds sincere religious beliefs that are inconsistent with filling any lawful prescription he or she must fill the prescription unless his or her employer can accommodate the belief without undue hardship to the employer or customers.

MONTANA

Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; License plates; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

NEBRASKA

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Does not have statewide allowance to restrict services

NEW JERSEY

D&X ban; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

New Jersey Senate Bill Number 2178:

A pharmacist may not refuse to dispense a prescription solely due to "philosophical, moral, or religious beliefs."

New Jersey Assembly Bill Number 3772:

A pharmacist may not refuse to dispense a prescription solely due to "philosophical, moral, or religious beliefs."

NEW MEXICO

D&X ban; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

NEVADA

Counseling and waiting period

NEW YORK

Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

NORTH CAROLINA

Parental notification

- On 12/6/04; the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy issued the following statement: A pharmacist has the right to avoid being complicit in behavior that is inconsistent with his or her morals or ethics. It is unacceptable, however, for pharmacists to impose their moral or ethical beliefs on the patients they serve. Pharmacists who object to providing a medication for a patient on this basis alone, therefore, should take proactive measures so as not to obstruct a patient's right to obtain such medication. The Board notes that although pharmacists have a right to avoid moral or ethical conflict, they do not have a right to obstruct otherwise legitimate prescription dispensing or delivery solely on the basis of conscientious objection.

NORTH DAKOTA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; Restricts insurance coverage for abortion

OHIO

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; License plates

OKLAHOMA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; License plates

OREGON

Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

PENNSYLVANIA

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; Parental notification

RHODE ISLAND

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

Rhode Island House Bill Number 5085:

Pharmacists and other health care providers may refuse to participate in a health care service, including dispensing any drug, device, or medication, that violates their conscience.

SOUTH CAROLINA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; License plates

SOUTH DAKOTA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; License plates

South Dakota House Bill Number 1255:

Pharmacists and other health care providers may refuse to participate in a health care service, including dispensing any drug, device, or medication, that violates their conscience.

South Dakota Code § 36-11-70:

"No pharmacist may be required to dispense medication" if "there is reason to believe that it will either 'cause an abortion' or 'destroy an unborn child.'" While contraception by definition prevents pregnancy rather than terminates it, South Dakota Code § 22-1-2(50A) defines "unborn child" as an organism beginning at "fertilization." This definition, which is outside the mainstream medical view, could be understood as re-defining some commonly used contraceptive drugs, including emergency contraception, as abortifacients because they may in rare instances prevent pregnancy after fertilization by preventing implantation of the fertilized egg in the uterus. On this basis, it is possible that pharmacists in South Dakota may invoke this abortifacient refusal provision to justify refusing to provide contraception, including emergency contraception.

TENNESSEE

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; License plates

Tennessee Senate Bill Number 76:

A pharmacist may not be required to fill a prescription that violates his or her "ethical or religious principles," but must give written notice of the intent to refuse to his/her supervisor who must post notice about the refusal at the pharmacy counter.

TEXAS

Counseling and waiting period; Parental notification
Texas House Bill Number 16:

Pharmacists and other health care providers may refuse to participate in, or perform, abortion procedures and may refuse to dispense, or participate in the dispensing of, an emergency contraceptive.

Texas House Bill Number 2061:

Pharmacies and pharmacists, among other health care providers, may refuse to provide or participate in the provision of health care services on ethical, moral, or religious grounds, except in a medical emergency.

UTAH

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

VIRGINIA

Restricts insurance coverage for abortion; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

VERMONT

Parental notification; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women; Does not currently have statewide allowance to restrict services (the below is still being argued in the House)

Vermont House Bill Number 183:

Pharmacists and other health care providers may refuse to participate in a health care service, including dispensing any drug, device, or medication that violates their conscience.

Washington

Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women

WEST VIRGINIA

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification; Uses public funds to pay for abortions for some poor women; Does not have statewide allowance to restrict services

West Virginia House Bill Number 2807:

A pharmacist may not refuse to dispense a lawful prescription unless it is contraindicated for the patient or it is not in stock.

West Virginia Senate Bill Number 673:

Pharmacists and other health care providers may refuse to participate in a health care service, including (according to the legislative findings) artificial birth control, that violates his or her conscience.

WISCONSIN

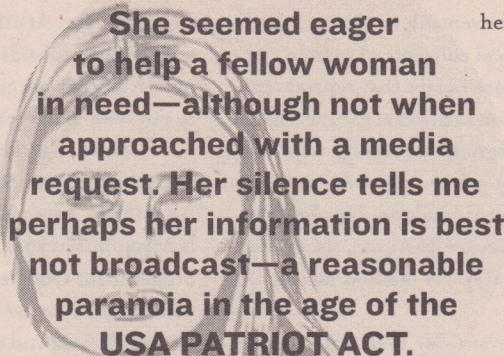
50% of women live in a county without a provider; Counseling and waiting period; D&X ban; Parental notification

• On July 6, 2002, a customer presented at a K-Mart in Menomonie, WI for a re-fill of her birth control prescription. The pharmacist on duty, Neil Noesen, asked the patient if she was using the prescription as a contraceptive. When she replied in the affirmative, Noesen advised that he would not fill her prescription due to his religious convictions. Noesen also refused to transfer her prescription, even after the patient involved law enforcement. The prescription was finally filled two days later by the managing pharmacist. In March, 2004, the state Department of Regulation and Licensing filed a complaint against the pharmacist with the Wisconsin Pharmacy Examining Board. PPWI filed an amicus brief in support of the patient's position. In March 2005, an administrative law judge issued an opinion drawing heavily from PPWI's amicus brief, ruling that Noesen had violated the Wisconsin code of ethics. The judge's recommendation called for an official reprimand and will require Noesen to provide notice of the reprimand to any future employers, attend continuing education courses in Ethics and pay the full costs of the proceedings against him. The Wisconsin Pharmacy Examining Board made a final ruling on Wednesday, April 13, 2005, voting to uphold the judge's ruling and ordering a reprimand of Noesen for denying the patient access to birth control.

WYOMING

50% of women live in a county without a provider; Parental notification

form. "What we do is inextricably tied to who's making the rules and what they think about freedom."



She seemed eager to help a fellow woman in need—although not when approached with a media request. Her silence tells me perhaps her information is best not broadcast—a reasonable paranoia in the age of the USA PATRIOT ACT.

Offline and on, the clinics themselves help young women navigate the road to choice. In states with parental notification laws for minors, which currently require judicial overrides, clinic staff have organized to help women to the courthouse and through the waiver process. Yet not all stories of clinic abortions include kindly nurses and smiling hugs. This is a medical procedure handled professionally—though it takes iron will and commitment to choose to work in the field.

Alternatives to the clinic

Many women take matters into their own hands for want of a better solution. The most popular site for herbal abortions is Sister Zeus (sisterzeus.com); the author warns that women must know their cycle well to use the information effectively. Indeed, many women report failed attempts with herbal tincture prescriptions from naturopaths, herbalist books, and other sources, leading them to regular clinics for a medical procedure later. "It seemed somehow less bad," posts Tina of her attempted herbal abortion, because it was "natural"—and in fact, women have been inducing abortions and practicing herbal and homeopathic birth control for hundreds of years.

The *New York Times* reports that many women are self-prescribing Cytotec, a brand of the synthetic hormone misoprostol, to induce medical abortions for about \$2.00 per use. This off-label use has been officially discouraged by the drug maker Pfizer, but doctors routinely use the medication with RU 486 in medical abortions, in surgical abortions, to induce contractions during childbirth or to prompt the uterus to contract after birth. In Brazil, where abortion is illegal and off-label misoprostol use high, the drug has been banned, leading to development of a black market.

Other women locate midwives who can help them without going to a clinic; Tina, who lives in Nebraska, reports that word of mouth has spread the information in her city. Another midwife in California has been compiling research on basic vacuum aspiration techniques for a book she hopes will be globally available to poor women. She seemed eager to help a fellow woman in need—although not when this reporter approached her with a media request. Her silence tells me perhaps her information is best not broadcast—a reasonable paranoia in the age of the USA PATRIOT ACT.

Ongoing challenges: education issues and the status quo

While readers of this publication likely believe that men and women who insist teenagers have the option to not have sex—thus rendering the need for birth control, sex education, and abortion unnecessary—are delusional, you may not realize the serious lack of understanding of reproductive health among the general youth population. A quick read of all-too-frequent questions on a livejournal.com community

focused on women's reproductive health (livejournal.com/community/vaginapagina) can quickly disabuse one of a false assumption that women on the Pill intrinsically know or care how it works or does not work—and we're not talking about preventing ovulation, thickening cervical fluid, or otherwise technical concepts of women's operational processes. Women everywhere are taught that reproductive health is secret and shameful, leading them to guess at the mechanics of conception. They ask if they can get pregnant the second time a guy ejaculates in a night, believe they cannot get pregnant during their period, and take birth control pills almost at random. This helps explain why, according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, 54 percent of women having abortions used a contraceptive method during the month they became pregnant.

Unintended pregnancies happen every day even with knowledgeable family planning. A friend reports that she had thought women who get pregnant accidentally were, in her words, stupid, until it happened to her. Erica, who has one toddler and is now expecting her second child, hasn't exactly changed her opinion on whether or not it's stupid but now appreciates that it still happens. She wasn't ready for the emotional fallout of having a second baby and opted for the abortion when she realized she'd miscalculated her cycle.

At present rates, one in three American women will have an abortion by the time she's 45—a statistic that can be read several ways. It's not such a big hairy secret, for one thing. More contraception counseling and birth control coverage by insurance companies, without waiting periods and parental notification, could certainly not hurt, for another. But women are always going to need abortion services, even married women with babies and husbands and money—and even evangelical, born-again and Catholic Christians, who have abortions alongside heathens before going back out to the corner to protest.

"There's not a lot of sense being made out there; people have a difficult time acknowledging that the goal is to provide help to create healthy women and healthy families," says Paula Wood, formerly a public affairs officer of Planned Parenthood in Augusta, GA. "It's hard to explain what it's like," she says on vacation in a Seattle coffeeshop, then tells a story of some new neighbors she had in Augusta. After chatting and offering to help take in mail and feed pets when they were on vacation, the topic of where she worked came up—"usually, I would just tell people 'I work in health care,' but this time I said 'I work at Planned Parenthood.' The conversation just ended there." Paula's neighbors wouldn't so much as return a friendly wave after that, and the social stigma could lead to limited career options when she returns to the area.

But, she says, the clinic managed to make progress in spite of the hundreds of people who are praying for her and all her colleagues. "A major indicator of progress is that we managed to sit at the table with local community organizations," she says. "We would start with what we have in common: preventing teen pregnancy is a fairly agreeable goal, you can't argue with that. In that way, we could start working together, show we have something in common, that we're on the same side, and could at least sit at the same table."

Her clinic, though, faced new challenges when a private clinic opened nearby. The fee for an abortion at Planned Parenthood of Georgia included what the clinic considered essential elements of

service: post-operative antibiotics, the first month of birth control or family planning assistance, and often valium or a sedative to take before the procedure, which were not included in the private clinic's advertised fee. At other clinics, women who can afford the full fee for a procedure subsidize lower-income women; the more patients who opt for the private clinic, the less annual income the public clinic has to put toward low-cost procedures.

Contrary to anti-abortion rhetoric, non-profit clinics are not wealth-generators for the doctors, nurses, and other staff who put in time there. Few medical schools regularly offer abortion training, leaving obstetrician/gynecologists with a gap in training. Medical Students for Choice supports training to ensure this medical service continues to be available to future generations. It's generally not a for-profit field and most doctors have to work hard to be trained, only to be stigmatized and subject to violent crime for their desire to offer complete medical services to female patients.

The politics game

Finally, there's the predictable unpredictability of politics, which the courts are meant to iron out with long-term judgments based on interpretation of the constitution and overarching societal movements—without "legislating from the bench."

In late July, Republican Senator Bill Frist announced his intention to support increased federal funding for stem-cell research, although he supported prolonging Terri Schiavo's life and is purportedly anti-abortion. The Attorney General of Kansas, Phill Kline, formerly known as a pro-choice, moderate Republican, recently interpreted state law on statutory rape (which indicates that any sex, consensual or non-, by persons under the age of 16 is illegal) to subpoena records from clinics on over 90 women who have had abortions. Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney (also a formerly moderate Republican in an overall Democrat-voting state) vetoed a state bill ensuring women would have access to emergency contraception such as Plan B, which prevents ovulation and therefore pregnancy when taken within 48-72 hours of unprotected sex or birth control failure.

Later, the FDA reneged on an agreement brokered between Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Patty Murray (D-WA) and the Bush administration to approve the nominated chairman, Lester Crawford, if the agency would announce a decision on providing Plan B over the counter to women over the age of 16. The *Washington Post* said the delay "makes the FDA . . . look like an easily manipulated political tool." No decision has been made about dispensing Plan B since that time; Susan Wood, director of the FDA's Office Women's Health, resigned immediately after the announcement to indefinitely postpone when the decision would be made, saying "I can't serve as staff when clear evidence is overruled." Within weeks, Crawford himself "retired," citing his age—69—after just two months of service. (Note that not-2-late.com provides a dosage chart using ordinary birth control pills as emergency contraception.)

There is an equal and opposite, if not so well-publicized, political response. Last year when pharmacists in towns from Texas to Wisconsin emerged as the latest threat to women's autonomy by refusing to fill prescriptions for the Pill, media coverage from alternative weeklies to *Prevention* magazine appeared and spurred

legislation in several states—some in defense of the pharmacists and some in defense of patients' rights. The House of Representatives has held hearings in which Republican women of Congress have stated that women "only think they have" a right to birth control. The Access to Legal Pharmaceuticals Act (ALPhA), though, brought by Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and others in the House, would require that a pharmacy fill any legal prescription in a timely manner, regardless of whether the pharmacist on duty when the 'scrip is submitted personally objects to the drug or not. Maloney is a tireless worker for women's rights; she has also helped reintroduce the Equal Rights Amendment, introduced a bill to ensure rape victims are offered emergency contraception, pressured George W. Bush to state his stance on birth control (as of press time, neither he nor press secretary McClellan would give a straight answer) and has created indices of anti-abortion laws introduced in Congress in recent years and the top 20 Bush policies that hurt women, both published on her congressional website.

Surprisingly, Clinton and Murray split on Roberts' confirmation vote—Patty passed while Hillary voted nay. Just weeks ago, and for decades, it has seemed ridiculous that a tenet determined in the courts in 1972—and one that was already considered by many to be a compromise to a woman's right to control her own reproductive health, that a woman's decisions regarding pregnancy and even birth control are her own—could be overturned. But on November 30, the court will consider *Ayotte vs. Planned Parenthood et al.*, which gets at the core of the pro-choice movement's ability to fight laws that injure women and women's right of self-determination. *Ayotte* concerns a 2003 New Hampshire law preventing doctors from performing an abortion for any woman under 18 until 48 hours after her parents are notified. No provision is included to protect a young woman's health—meaning she could be blinded, lose kidney function, or even die during the waiting period.

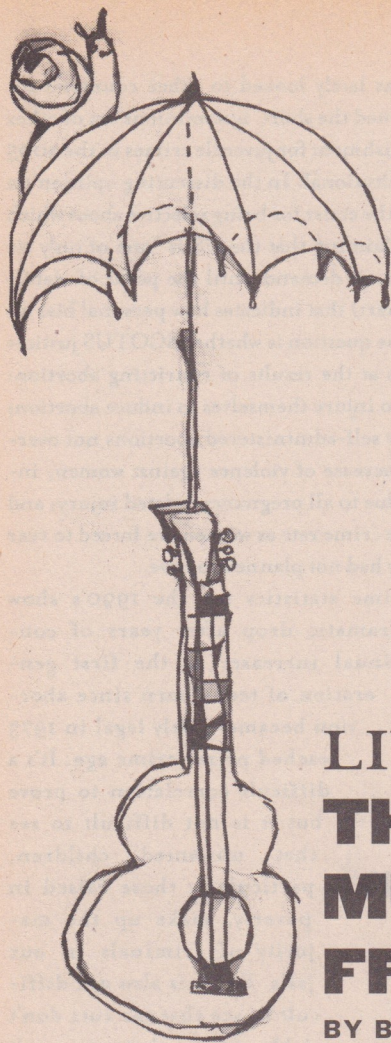
With this case, the court will reconsider two critical questions that in the past have had one, affirmative answer: must a law contain an exception for a woman's health to be constitutionally valid? And, can a law be challenged on the basis that it is unconstitutional in some (but not all) cases? A negative answer to the first means any woman's life and health are worth only her ability to reproduce—a determination no person has the right to make for another. And a "no" to the second would turn back the clock to the early 20th century when the woman who became known as Jane Roe had to give birth while she fought retroactively for self-determination, and birth control pioneers broke the laws intentionally as the only way to bring them to the courts.

The Supreme Court has lately looked to other countries for precedent; Justice Kennedy cited the short, ignominious list of other nations that allow capital punishment for juvenile crimes in the 2005 decision declaring it unconstitutional. In the dissenting opinion on the case, Justice Scalia scolds the court for being selective about which foreign standards to apply, claiming that the US is "one of only six countries that allow abortion on demand until the point of viability"—an overstatement (see chart) that indicates how personal bias on the court colors decisions. The question is whether SCOTUS justices will also look with clear eyes at the results of restricting abortion: later abortions; teenagers who injure themselves to induce abortion; women obtaining Cytotec for self-administered abortions not overseen by a doctor's care; an increase of violence against women; increased hospital admissions due to all pregnancy-related injury; and even an increase in the crime rate as women are forced to rear children they had not planned to have.

Crime statistics for the 1990's show a dramatic drop after years of continual increases as the first generation of teens born since abortion became widely legal in 1973 reached prime crime age. It's a difficult correlation to prove but it is not difficult to see that unwanted children, particularly those raised in poverty, make up the majority of criminals in our jails. But it is also not difficult to see that tax cuts don't trickle down, that you can't spread democracy like butter with guns, that allowing SUVs, limitless gas does not improve the American economy, or that putting unqualified friends in positions of great responsibility leads to disaster.

Fortunately, even conservative women may soon find it an affront when laws limit their own life choices at the pharmacy counter and in the doctor's office. Pro-choice women may soon find themselves responding to pregnant women in need across the country not with advice to call a local clinic, which may not even exist, but with advice on home abortions and accessing drugs like Cytotec online. Five years of Bush presidency have taught those who are paying attention that a single man can change the country and reason is not enough to stop him, yet history has also taught us that the cycles of nature play out in politics as well. Whether SCOTUS upholds restrictive laws on young women or not, individuals will continue to work to ensure women are able to control their own bodies and as long as the minimum rights and freedoms are in place, it will be possible. How long and how deep the cycle of official suppression of women's choices will be depends on the 2008 presidential election—how this cycle will affect America's future may not be visible for another generation. ©

**We would start with
what we have
in common: preventing teen
pregnancy is a
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can't argue with that.**



LIVE FROM THE CIRCLE BAR: THE REAL NEW ORLEANS MUSIC SCENE EMERGES FROM THE STORM

BY BILLY SOTHERN | ILLUSTRATION BY NADINE Y. NAKANISHI

At New Orleans' Circle Bar, wearing a black suit with a muted pinstripe tie, Luke Allen, the frontman of the Happy Talk Band, welcomes people back to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina destroyed much of the city and drove many residents away: "Thanks for coming back folks. It's a great city. Everything else is a strip mall. We will lose in the end but have fun while it lasts."

With his post-punk imperfect pitch and his cigarette jammed in the tuners of his guitar, he then proceeds to sing his songs of this city he loves: having a broken heart at the Huey P. Long Bridge, Collins-mix and Methadone, and the melancholy jealousy of dating a stripper. He has a strange idea of "fun." A lot of people here do.

For the past months, many of us New Orleans residents have been traveling the country, missing our town, and despairing at both the low point that the city had sunk to as well as the narrow lens through which the rest of the country was seeing New Orleans and its culture. People watching TV across the country have grown used to seeing the tedious grins and hearing the views of musicians like Wynton Marsalis and Harry Connick, Jr., the son of a famously racist New Orleans district attorney, as the sole representatives of New Orleans culture. This version of the city's culture is so narrow that people

outside New Orleans seem shocked when I tell them that locals at the Circle Bar don't sit around listening to Louis Armstrong and the Hot Fives on the jukebox all night long. While the Circle Bar's jukebox, the best in town, isn't afraid to look back into the city's past with Irma Thomas' "Drip drop, drip drop / It's raining so hard / Looks like it's gonna rain all night," pouring out of the speakers occasionally, the live music at the Circle Bar has a decidedly less anachronistic tone.

There have been few honest assessments of local music tastes in the press. The New Orleans *Times Picayune* did get something right, however, in an article that mentioned the looting of the music section of Lower Garden District Wal-Mart: " 'They took everything — all the electronics, the food, the bikes,' said John Stonaker, a Wal-Mart security officer. 'People left their old clothes on the floor when they took new ones. The only thing left are the country-and-western CDs. You can still get a Shania Twain album.' "

It is true. There is not a single "new country" fan among any of my friends and neighbors. However, while there may be more traditional jazz fans per capita in New Orleans than anywhere in the world, New Orleans had many great musicians of all different stripes—from rockabilly, to alt-country, to klezmer, and many hybrids therein.

For the past five years, the Circle Bar played host to and embraced this smart and eclectic scene that reflects the city's music roots

and its current life. The bands that play there respect the city's musical heritage. They know the music of Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, Professor Longhair, and others patron saints of New Orleans music, but are making music that is new and different and reflects the city that was laid waste by the storm in a present and immediate manner.

Lefty Parker, who runs the bar, books the bands, and plays bass in the thumping indie band the Interlopers, is a big booster of the city's rock music, in as much as he is earnest about anything. In explaining what is special about the new music coming out of New Orleans, he says, simply, "Music comes from the poor. It always has. This city is poor. And we are poor."

By way of explanation, Allen elaborates, "When I got here in the early '90's, it smelled bad, it was littered, and it was nothing like California. I felt like I belonged here."

New Orleans has struggled for generations with poverty and racism that hides at the margins throughout this country. While newscasts of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina suggested that images of people wading through fetid water made New Orleans appear utterly destitute, people that live outside the Disneyland Gomorrah of the French Quarter know better. Allen explains, "This city has always been falling apart. The first time I was here, years ago, it reminded me of parts of Mexico, with its third-world poverty and desperation without a solution."

No one who lives here was surprised to see neighbors suffering in the Superdome or neglected and turned away by racist government officials from neighboring towns, as the slow torture by neglect of these communities has been widely witnessed for years. From housing to education, the everyday people of New Orleans, some of the poorest yet most optimistic and kind in this country, never really expected much better than they got. Why would they?

For Allen, what he describes as the city's "dilapidation and entropy" fed his songs, almost all of which reference the city. "Ash Wednesday" tells of flooding and murder in the Lower 9th Ward. "Forget-Me-Not" narrates a story of getting picked up by the police in the Bywater for murder and waking up on the 3rd floor of Charity Hospital, a mental health ward of the New Orleans' public hospital.

It goes to describe much about what makes this city different: when do you ever hear New York's "it bands" singing about Bellevue Hospital or East New York?

Allen also explained that the city's cheap rents and drink-to-forget atmosphere were a draw for many musicians, "The bars were open 24 hours a day and I didn't want to go home so, along with a lot of other musicians, we got drunk, pipe dreamed about music, and worked at bars. And it was possible because my rent was only \$250."

For other bands, like the raucous Morning 40 Federation, which now provides the rhythm section for the Happy Talk Band when two of their original band members evacuated to drier climes, the city's decay has provided the backdrop for a post-apocalyptic bacchanal, a party on a precipice.

That party appealed so much to Dave Neupert of M80 Music,

a new Los Angeles record label, that he decided to sign the 40's and lets them practice at his house in the Faubourg Marigny, another downtown neighborhood. He explains, "This is underappreciated music that the rest of the country should hear."

As in other cities, music is a lifestyle as much as an art. Perhaps because of the city's long tradition of music and its veneration of musicians, musicians and music-lovers have license to allow their fervor to take full bloom. In many instances, the scenesters are not content to merely wear the clothes of their favorite American cultural period. At mod dance night on Saturday nights at the Circle Bar, boys in bowl haircuts and polyester pants dance the fish and the swim to their favorite '60's soul alongside facially pierced and tattooed punks, and Linzey Zaorski, one of a number of local Billie Holiday-esque jazz chanteuses has affected not only the '40's starlet dress of the era but even the tinny sound of an old 78 in her inflection. Here, the cultural synthesis of past and present creates a vibrancy and originality in our music that defies simple categorization, makes life interesting, and locates the culture squarely in New Orleans.

This sense of place is echoed throughout the New Orleans music scene, filled with people who fell in love with the city as one enters a deeply dysfunctional love affair. Many came to this city like sailors drawn to the sirens and crashed against the rocks, but no less smitten.

Not everyone has made it back since the storm. Alex McMurray, who sang his strange and beautiful songs in gravelly tones at the Circle Bar every Wednesday for years, is now playing on the Lower East Side a couple times a week. It's hard to imagine where he found a tubaist or washboard player with an ear for his sound in that town.

Mike Lenore, the old upright bass player for the Happy Talk Band, is also working on New York's Lower East Side and is struggling to figure out if he wants to come back to New Orleans. For his part, he is proud to have been a part of the music scene in New Orleans and to have played on bills with Liquidrone, Bingo, the 40's, and the many other bands that make up this music scene. He likens it to other great music eras and thinks that history might look back on it more fondly than the present has. If, of course, it can retain the vitality it had before the hurricane.

Shannon McNally, whose new album *Geronimo* came out recently on Back Porch Records, and her husband Wallace Lester, the drummer for the New Orleans rock band Bipolaroid, have settled in Taylor, Mississippi. Taylor is a small town with an amazing catfish restaurant outside Oxford, Mississippi, not far from Memphis. They miss their Bywater neighborhood desperately but McNally is touring and needs a good home base while Lester has settled into a life of catfish, creek-walks with his dogs that he rescued from the New Orleans streets post-Katrina, and a weekly gig playing with the Thacker Mountain Band. McNally describes her indie/alt-country music as "songs for people who are fighting and struggling against shit." As nice and peaceful as Taylor, Mississippi is this time of year, chances are good they'll head back to New Orleans, the city of struggle, before long. ©

Urban Renewal in Asbury Park

When the Boss romanticized the Jersey Shore for America, did he start a process that pushed out the poor?

Text and Photos By Leah Ryan

Asbury Park, New Jersey is forever linked in American minds with Bruce Springsteen. The Boss invariably conjures up images of gritty streets, motorcycle grease, girls and boys in faded denim smoking Marlboro Reds. Asbury is an American town like many others—the towns you grow up in, spend years trying to escape, and then spend the rest of your life (spent elsewhere) longing for. It's a cliché—there's no downtown, there are no jobs, there's nothing to do. But that's starting to change.

I visited Asbury a few times as a kid, in the early 1970s—my grandmother spent a week or two there every summer. I remember it as seedy and depressing. Haunting, even. I spent a lot of summer days on Jersey Shore boardwalks, and they were always a little creepy, a little trashy, a little dangerous. If you wanted trouble, trouble was always at the ready.

For decades, Asbury Park was totally off my radar—it was gentrification that brought it back. Asbury Park, unlike many of its dead American hometown counterparts, possesses something utterly commodifiable—a beach. For years, politicians and developers have been fighting over that beach. In fact, not long ago, a co-worker told me that Asbury was becoming something of a vacation spot for gay men. “It has potential,” he told me. “But it's kind of scary.” This made me curious enough to hop on a train and check it out.

The Asbury Park waterfront stopped making money with the recession in the 1970s, when America's leisure appetites changed. The people who made sick money in the 1980s, who benefited from the tax cuts provided by the Reagan Administration (while the minimum wage stayed put year after year, with prices inflating by leaps and bounds) didn't want to eat soft-serve ice cream on the boardwalks of the Jersey Shore anymore. Now they wanted to own summer homes, in places like the Hamptons. Disneyland and Six Flags eclipsed the old amusement parks. And all of America's downtowns were starting to disintegrate in the shadow of one huge mall after another. In the '70s and '80s, a nearby state men-

tal health facility dumped a large number of its patients into the crumbling hotels of Asbury Park, and middle- and working-class folks, black and white, trying to raise families in Asbury, left town in response. Tourism also dropped off, and the city's cash flow was quickly affected.

My co-worker was right: there is a gay community in Asbury, and it's heralding an urban renewal. One of the old beachfront motels, the Empress, has been restored and is doing brisk business. A club across the street boasts a visit from RuPaul on its marquis. A small triangle of the downtown area is being revitalized, and a number of colorful shops and restaurants have risen from the urban ashes. It feels rarified and exclusive. But it's just one small cog in a real estate development wheel that's bigger than RuPaul ever was, even in her heyday.

I walk diagonally from the waterfront area to the site of the beautification on Cookman Avenue. It's not a short walk—six long city blocks. I pass building after deserted building—empty, burned out, boarded up. Traffic lights flash red, yellow, green—but virtually no cars traversed the intersections. I passed a few old hotels that were gutted, covered with vines and plastered with “For Sale” signs that looked years old. There are literally no open businesses for blocks. I found a strip club that looked like it might be alive, and two bail bondsmen. One pawnshop. That's it. No bodega, no laundromat. No place to buy a pack of cigarettes or a newspaper. Nothing. Finally, up ahead, I saw signs of life. Banners on the lampposts seemed desperate to thank you for visiting the New Improved Downtown Business District. And suddenly, suddenly... sushi. Sushi and fancy housewares and self-consciously kitschy souvenir shops. A block beyond it, and we're back to the desolation, the eerie emptiness, and the occasional bail bondsmen.

It's midday on a weekend at the height of the summer season, and the new business district is quiet. I'm told it gets hopping on some Saturday nights, and I guess I believe it. But I can't help wondering why (and really, if) people wealthy enough to buy a \$500 antique reproduction doorknocker, for example, would visit

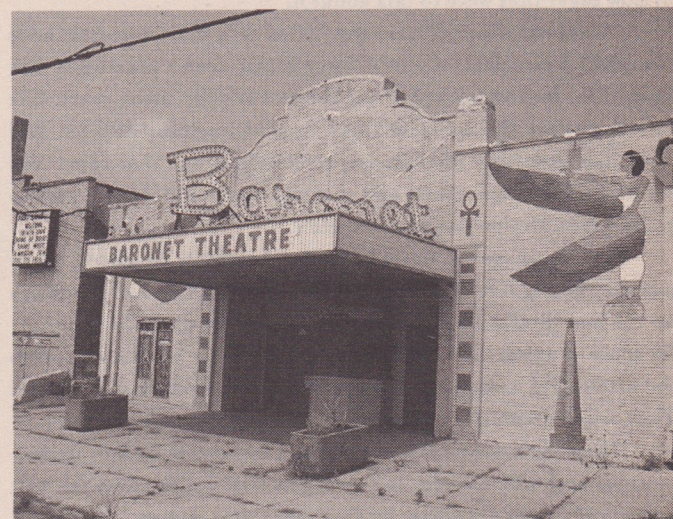


Asbury Park. As much as I want to be happy about this revitalization, and grateful that someone is injecting money into this place that I'm starting to fall in love with (against my better judgment, as love often is) I can't help but feel that there's something terribly wrong-headed about this particular process of urban renewal.

For example, it's clear when you scratch at the surface of the city's history that it has always been a very clearly segregated town. You've got your East Side (the ocean side) and you've got your West Side, which is literally and figuratively across the tracks. The West Side (a predominantly black area), whether the boardwalk is prosperous or not, has always been neglected. It was built to fall apart. And for decades, large sections of it have been barren and burnt out.

The summer of 2005 saw the restoration of the boardwalk and some patching up of the gorgeous casino building and its pedestrian walkway. New business has sprung up on the boardwalk, and beach passes are selling at twice the rate of last year. The beautiful Convention Hall and Paramount Theatre hosted Henry Rollins and the Moscow Circus this season, among others. The ancient boardwalk Howard Johnson's is still open and looks like it even has a few customers. After years of stops and starts and stalls, it looks like some new money is being pumped into the city's gasping economy. How can this be bad?

One woman who might be able to answer this for me is Maureen Nevin, who hosts *Speak Up, It's America—the Radio Voice of Asbury Park* on WYGG, 88.1 FM every Thursday night. In addition to covering local arts and cultural events, Nevin covers civic issues on her show, so I asked for her take on the current redevelopment plan. I had heard rumors about the big real estate developers who were moving into Asbury's waterfront area. The land had been tied up in bankruptcy court for years, Nevin tells me, and what the city should have done was to adjust the development plan to conform



to the current market—less residential density and more tourism, to best serve the needs of the city.

That didn't happen. "We came out of the bankruptcy court literally tied to another sole entity—Asbury Partners. They were supposed to be just that—our partners. They were supposed to supply the investment seed capital while bringing us multiple developers to choose from. As it turned out, they screened the developers themselves and brought us their choices," Nevin says.

The unfortunate (and predictable) outcome, of course, is that Asbury's "partners" are building condos that start at half a million dollars each and go up from there. And with the power of Eminent Domain like a concealed weapon in their vest, there's no telling what they might do.

Meanwhile, a scrappy, tenacious music scene has remained through all the ups and downs of the past several decades, and

many of its venues are in the development zone. The Stone Pony (though it has changed hands a few times) has never closed its doors, no matter how bad things have gotten, and it looks like a beacon even now, rising out of an area that actually looks post-apocalyptic. Smaller venues, like Asbury Lanes, book bands from all over the country and are also packed several nights a week.

Asbury Lanes is a bowling alley, and like the Stone Pony, it has been open for business through thick and thin for decades. It sits on block near the waterfront that's all but deserted, next to an empty crumbling movie theatre, and a rock club that now stands vacant. In addition to functioning as a bowling alley every night, Asbury Lanes, for the past few years, has hosted bands every weekend. The bands play on a small raised platform in the middle of the lanes. Some people bowl on the available lanes on either side of the stage, and some just come for the music.

Outside Asbury Lanes, I watched the crowd come and go—a pretty good crowd at that. I had a quick conversation with Ryan, on a brief break from his job running the kitchen, and Lori who works the door. I didn't even get their last names—I just asked them how much they thought about the news about the Real Estate Developers who were taking over the waterfront. I was surprised by how eager they were to talk about it.

"We think about it every day," Ryan tells me, while Lori adds that she's been part of the Asbury music scene practically her whole life, having worked at the Stone Pony for many years. She now lives near the new Cookman Avenue business district, and notes the downside of their city's revitalization: that some new residents are a little snotty and that you do have to drive a ways to get to a laundromat or a grocery store.

Paul Yavarone Jr. started the Big Art Show in 2003. Every month, the Big Art Show occupies the decrepit Howard Johnson's on the boardwalk. There's no judge or jury for the show—they offer space to any artist who wants to display their work at no cost to the artist, and sometimes have as many as 25 artists participate. They also have music, with several bands playing at every show.

When I attended a Big Art Show, I was struck by how unpretentious and old-school it felt—and the five-dollar cover felt just right, too. "I was always really frustrated with cliquy art scenes," Yavarone told me. "It seemed like it was almost impossible just to go show your work unless you're considered 'commercially viable', the right person's friend, or rich. I really believe that if people care about what they do and they want to share it, they should be able to." Yavarone has also brought his traveling extravaganzas to Philadelphia and New York, where he's had bigger shows, much better crowds and actually made a bit of money. None of the people who make the Big Art Show happen are rich—everyone has a full-time job.

Asbury shows, Yavarone tells me, tend to lose money, and the income from the bigger shows helps make up the losses. So why do shows in Asbury? "Asbury Park is in an interesting place. It's almost like some kind of war zone if the war happened in the wreckage of an amusement park. It's definitely a one-of-a-kind place, almost ominous." I asked him if he could think of any reason why he might decide that the Asbury shows were no longer worth the money it cost to produce them. He shrugged. "We'll take a break in the winter,

Of course she knows that her business is smack dab in the middle of the bulldozer zone. It's hard not to feel that the developers are using the small business people as a stopgap until they can bring in Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, and Whole Foods.

maybe." Apparently it hadn't yet occurred to him to quit.

The money the "partners" are now investing to beautify the decaying boardwalk is not just a neighborly gesture to help out the struggling businesspeople that have weathered the storm. It's to lull and charm prospective buyers. To that end, the "partners" have also attracted a smattering of new businesspeople. It's mostly typical boardwalk fare: candy stores and video arcades, shops filled with beach toys and T-shirts and folding beach chairs. I walked into one such shop, which was utterly unassuming on the outside. Once inside, my eye was immediately drawn to a wall of photographs, some dating back to the turn of the century.

Kay Harris, one of the store's two proprietors, is responsible for the photographs. Some are old pictures that she has restored. Some are her own work that she has matted and framed. Some belong to other local photographers and she sells them on consignment. Whatever the case, the operative word is *local*. All of the photos feature Asbury Park, and Kay Harris is about as local as you can get. Her family has been in Asbury for three generations, and she grew up on the West side, near the famous Springwood Avenue, which was once the main business thoroughfare on the West Side and then became the site of such notorious civil unrest that the city changed a large stretch of the avenue's name to Lake Avenue. "Now they're going to change it back to Springwood," Kay tells me. "They want us to be nostalgic, but I'm not sure how far back they want us to go."

Kay's father, Lorenzo Harris, was the first black city councilman in Asbury. Her Grandfather, Lorenzo Harris Sr., is represented in a number of the photographs displayed in her store. Invariably, he's posing with an enormous, highly detailed sand sculpture on the Asbury Park beach. The sculptures depict a variety of complex historical narratives, from ancient Egypt up to the respective present (the 1920s and '30s.) Invariably, curiously, he's also wearing a fez.



"He passed as an Arab," Kay Harris tells me, answering my question before I could ask it. "This was back when the beach was segregated. He worked both sides of the beach."

I would later learn from Harris that efforts to eject him from the white beach were met with protests from white tourists who enjoyed his artwork and didn't want to see him go. Lorenzo Harris then brought his friends, both black and white, to the beach with him. He was instrumental in the painfully slow and stubborn process of desegregation in Asbury, starting with the beach.

But before I even heard that story, I stood glued to the photographs, amazed by the sheer enormity and incredible detail of the sculptures. Harris explained that the sand was mixed with cement to give it more durability, but the sculptures were still utterly ephemeral, and would be washed away as soon as it rained or the tide came in. Oh, and he built them with one arm. He lost the other building the Holland Tunnel.

I stood in Harris's store and watched as unsuspecting tourists stumbled in and did exactly what I had done—make a beeline for the photographs. Many of the photos are for sale, and at very reasonable prices, starting at around 20 dollars. Kay doesn't seem to mind that lots of people would rather talk than buy. They remember a long-torn-down building from their youth and they want to ask her about it (Palace Amusements is one—it was torn

down last year amid great hew and cry) or they admire a photo of a famous shipwreck they've read about and ask for details. Europeans come in to talk to Harris about the town they've heard about in Springsteen's ballads. They didn't come to America to go to Disneyland—they've come to see Springsteen's decaying American dream. Kay Harris good-naturedly offers herself as a font of information, even running to the back to get her laptop so she can look something up for a customer. The customer thanks her, but leaves without spending a dime.

Asbury Shutterbugs is just a sideline. Kay works full-time, running a technical help desk for AT&T. Her boss is supportive, and so is her husband. But this business is a huge investment—not just of money, but of time.

Of course she knows that her business is smack dab in the middle of the bulldozer zone. It's hard not to feel that the developers are using the small business people as a stopgap until they can bring in Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, and Whole Foods.

Larry Fishman, the big cheese at Asbury Partners, stated publicly that he didn't recommend that families with children purchase units in his development, because of the sad state of the local school system (needless to say, the minute the schools were desegregated in the 1960s, white people either moved to another town or put their kids in private school.) It's clear that although he's a "partner" with Asbury Park, doesn't feel any sense of accountability to the community as a whole, particularly not to the perpetually neglected West Side. But you can bet that when those people move into their million-dollar condos, they're going to want an upscale mall to go with it, and that's exactly what they'll get, no matter what has to be destroyed in the process. Maybe then there'll finally be a place to buy a pack of cigarettes and a newspaper in Asbury Park, but who will be there to benefit?

Even right now, Harris and her husband, solidly middle-class (he works for Amtrak) can't afford to buy a home in Asbury. They live in nearby Neptune. "I feel like a traitor," Harris says, with a twinkle in her eye. "Neptune was our rival in High School."

Paul Yavarone Jr. says, "Nothing that people do here seems to be for the people who are actually already here. It's a self-perpetuating vacuum." And what of the city's musical history? Springsteen did more than just wax poetic about the Jersey Shore. He also built a racially integrated band at a time when nobody was crossing the tracks.

Before leaving Harris's shop, I take one last look at a photo of her grandfather. In this image, the tide is coming in and the water is starting to wash his latest artwork away. He's just standing there watching it happen. He knew it was coming from the moment he began the sculpture, countless hours before, and he does it again and again, day after day. Of course, that's what his grand daughter is doing, too, and I'm sure he would be proud.

"You can take the adversarial position and never get to play in the game," she explains, "or you can go in with your eyes wide open, and while you're at it, there could be an opportunity to influence how you would like to see the city move forward."

Harris is in Asbury Park building her sandcastle. She knows the tide's coming in eventually, but she's not going to let that stop her from doing the work she enjoys. ©



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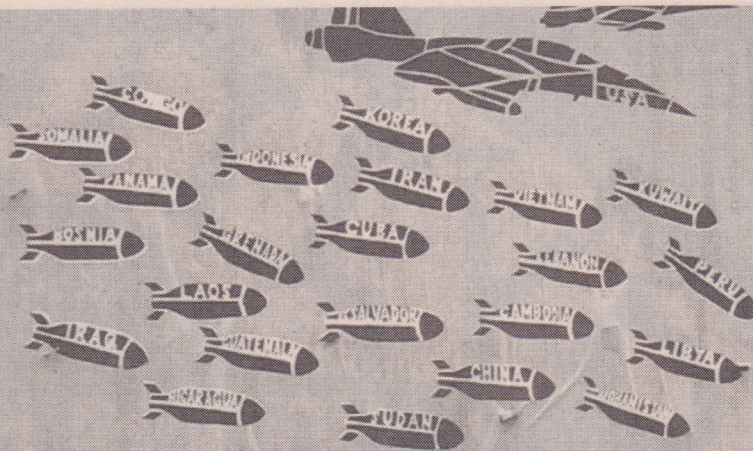
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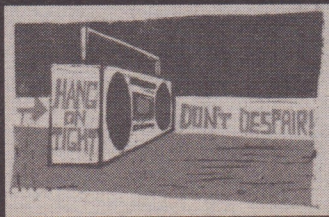


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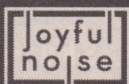
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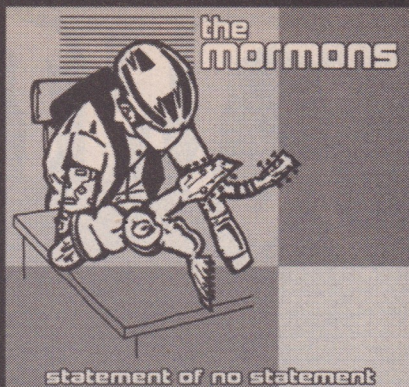
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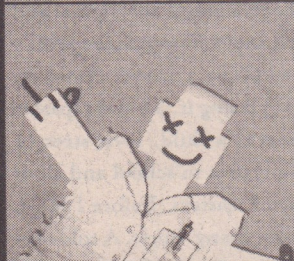


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All of those 1980s college movies like *Animal House* never had me fooled. They can try to dazzle me with their toga parties

and panty raids, but I know that the real action happens out there, in the real world. And it doesn't get much more *real* than going to school with people who have babies and arrest records. I'm not talking about any namby-pamby/my-daddy's-got-a-gold-card/my-future's-so-bright-type university. I'm talking community college. What it lacks in resources and clean restrooms, it more than makes up for in comedic value. Trust me, I know of what I speak. Having attended community college off-and-on for a period spanning 10 years, you can consider me the guru perched atop the mountain of financial aid lines and waylaid dreams. Community college is for the battle scarred, the colorful, the people who partied too much in high school or got married too young, but who still want more, making new plans beyond all of the parties and families and crappy career choices of yesteryear.

This semester, I bid a tender good-bye to community college, as I must take my last two general education requirements. I've been putting off taking these two classes on account of a severe case of chicken-shititis, but now the time has come to take this bull by the horns.

The first is math. I am fucking terrible at math. I will most likely give you incorrect change and I don't know what fucking time

the train that left Brownsville Station is going to arrive in New York City if Johnny left the house at 8 a.m. I can't even keep track of how many days until my next period. I refuse to be in charge of the band fund and I would rather just pay the entire phone bill myself than figure out who owes what. Luckily, there is a class for people like me and it's called: Math For Liberal Arts Majors. My friend Jeff cracked, "Isn't that like, Using A Calculator 101" and I can't say that he's wrong. There are Sunday Funnies characters adorning my math book, and not even the more popular ones, either. Bad ones. Like, Hagar the Horrible and Wee Pals and shit.

The guy who sat next to me in class last week was noticeably drunk. His 180-proof breath was curling the edges of my homework and he fell down on his way to the pencil sharpener. His smell was that of the underpass by my house. And you know what? I bet that guy is gonna get at least a C+.

The other class I've been dreading is Speech. Public speaking scares me in a different way than math. I can conjure an original and entertaining topic, I know how to research and compose a compelling speech, and I like to think I know how to please a crowd. However, knowing how to do something, and actually doing it, are two separate issues. My anxiety knows no bounds. Even as a child, I was stressed out. I used to shred Kleenex when I was nervous in school and all of my pockets looked like homes for wayward hamsters. Before I play a show, I always have to pee. Sometimes many, many, times. A sold-out show means I'm going to be in the bathroom for about a quarter of the time. That's just me. I don't like to think of it as dysfunctional, but I will accept the label "charmingly retarded."

I had to give my second speech in my public speaking class yesterday. It went over much better than expected, but this isn't about me. This is about the dude who went on after me, who I'm quickly becoming fascinated with. First of all, he gave me a "what-what" from the back of the class when I namedropped the Hilltop Mall (the run-down mall by where I grew up) during my presentation about drive-in theatres. Then, when it was his turn to get in front of the class, he asked if he could draw a visual on the board. The teacher gave him the go-ahead, and he went to work. He's a large man, and his body was blocking the board as he was drawing. It was taking a long, long, time, so you could only imagine he must be drawing an elaborate series of charts and graphs. When he was finished, he stepped aside to reveal his masterpiece: a stick figure-ish drawing of a human head with a superimposed brain with squiggle lines in it. In front of the face, was a drawing of a bong and one of a joint. He then addressed the class:

"My speech is about weed!"

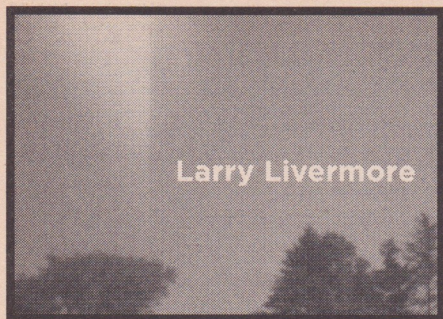
I love that guy! What is he thinking? There were also two separate speeches given that day about STDs. The first guy's was fairly typical, complete with free condom distribution, but the girl who went after him really went the extra mile. She had a handmade cardboard display with words like "Curable" written in curly-cue, silver glitter puffy paint, next to a photo of a rotting penis. She stumbled over "vaginal." When it came time to speak of other regions, it went down like this: "The ana . . . anu . . . you know . . ." she slaps her butt to illustrate her point, "the anal area."

Going to class is not always like getting a free front row seat to Def Comedy Jam, however. It's painful to see extremely shy people

struggling through a speech. And then, sometimes, enduring the mundane, yawn-inducing, topics that some people feel compelled to speak on, such as investing money and learning disabilities, that is sometimes even more painful. Thankfully, the horny jockey is in my class and is more than willing to take up the slack. Not only is the horny jockey A) Actually really horny, he is also B) A for-real jockey, riding the ponies at Golden Gate Fields and standing on tiptoes to reach the water fountain in the hallway. The original Sex Dwarf. He manages to slip in an innuendo at any opportunity. You would think that giving a speech on renter's rights would hinder his dirty impulses, but ol' HJ loves a challenge. During the portion of his speech where he explained what damages a renter might be liable for, he was, like, "Guys, if you have your girlfriend over and you get two holes in the wall above the headboard from her stiletto heels, you're liable for that." I am so glad that he took the time to address this prevalent problem, the bane of landlords everywhere.

Adults are always telling the youth to stay in school, but this is just another crock perpetrated by the Man. It's always better to do whatever it is you feel like you need to get done. Sometimes that includes school, sometimes not. You can always go back to school, believe me. It's less likely that you'll feel like or have the opportunity to hop trains or roadie for a band in Mexico. After years of going buck wild and working crappy jobs is no longer fulfilling, you'll have a more clear picture of what you want to do and will be of better use to your fellow man, producing fewer regrets in the long run.

Tales Of Blarg #9 should be out by the time you read this—featuring an interview with the Clorox Girls and stories and comics by the likes of me, Heather "Chunx" Jewett, Scott Crack Rock, Jeff Jank, Chris Murdoch, Jeff Heerman, Seth Bogart, Richie Bucher, Mr. Mike, and more. If you can't find it in your local comic book store, order it through www.gimmeaction.com or from Last Gasp.



Larry Livermore

**LIES THAT LIFE IS BLACK
AND WHITE**

*Good and bad, I defined
these terms / Quite
clear, no doubt some-
how / Ah, but I was so
much older then / I'm
younger than that now*

—B. Dylan

Old Bob made a beeline for me the minute he heard my American accent.

"Are you familiar with Tulsa, Oklahoma?" he wanted to know. "Not especially," I told him. "I spent a pretty dreary weekend there once."

"Ah! Did you get out to see the airfield? I always ask Americans if they've been there. I have fond memories of the place."

"Fond memories of Tulsa, Oklahoma?" I asked. "That's not a phrase I've often heard."

"I was in the Royal Air Force. I did some training there at the beginning of the War."

"If you were in the RAF," I asked, "what were you doing training in the US?"

"You Americans," as I would often come to hear from him, "You don't know your own history. Your President Roosevelt invited us over for training. It was his way of helping while you dithered about whether you were going to come into the war or not."

While still in his teens, Bob had been a fighter pilot, defending London against the German bombers preparing the way for a full-scale invasion of Britain. Once the Americans entered the war and the tide began to turn, he flew hundreds more missions, helping to drive the Nazis back across Europe.

I've met half a dozen survivors of the Battle of Britain, all in their 80s or 90s now. Without exception, they've been some of the most modest, unassuming, and down-to-earth guys I've ever known. These are the men about whom Winston Churchill said, "Never has so much been owed by so many to so few," yet not once have I heard anything that sounded remotely like bragging.

If anything, they downplayed their heroics, as if dodging machine gun and anti-aircraft fire and risking death on a daily basis were something any decent person would do, as if it were nothing more remarkable than helping an old lady across the street or putting litter in the bin instead of tossing it on the ground.

Of course Bob and his mates grew up in a different era and fought in a very different sort of war than the one we contend with today. When your country is being bombed, when a vast fascist army is preparing to invade you, there doesn't tend to be much discussion over whether or not the war is justified. And even if the Nazi threat hadn't been so clearcut and imminent, people were less inclined to question what their government—or any authority figure—told them.

Old Bob might have grown up that way, but he was no longer quite so docile. "Most wars are bloody stupid," he'd tell me, "cooked up by self-serving politicians, and fed by the blood, sweat and mon-

ey of the working classes who never know what hit them until it's too late." He'd photocopy poems, usually by writers who'd served as soldiers themselves, that spelled out the brutality, futility, and ultimate hopelessness of war.

He'd carry them around until he ran into me. "Ah! There you are!" he'd say. "Read this and tell me this fellow doesn't have a handle on what this war business is all about."

But while Bob abhorred the bloody and destructive aspects of war, he was fascinated by the machines used to fight it, especially the planes he himself had flown. He spent much of his spare time visiting airfields and museums and memorials.

Even though he'd discovered that I knew next to nothing about airplanes or his other passion, cars ("What kind of Yank are you?" he demanded then), it never stopped him from telling me about them, or showing me schematic diagrams of fighter engines or auto body designs that, like his war poems, he carried around to show to people.

I still wasn't much interested in planes or cars, but Bob was so enthusiastic that I enjoyed listening to him banging on about them anyway. Besides, though I never would have told him—it only would have annoyed him—I admired the old guy. Not just for his youthful heroics, but the zest and joy with which he lived his life, and what I saw as his quiet, basic decency.

Then I didn't see him for a year or two. When I ran into him again this summer, he looked visibly different. A bit older, of course—he was 85 now—and looked as though life were finally beginning to wear him down.

"I've gone blind," he said sadly, waving his hands to show that he couldn't see them in front of his own face. "Had to sell my car, much as I hated to." In years past I'd seen him polishing his lovingly restored Triumph Spitfire, a car he'd chosen at least partly because it bore the same name as the fighters he'd flown in the war. It was probably an exaggeration when he told me he loved that car as much as his wife. But not a huge exaggeration.

Bob wasn't about to let his blindness stop him from walking around the neighborhood, but he'd often run into trouble finding his way home. I'd see him in the middle of a street, looking befuddled, and ask, "Do you mind if I walk with you for a while? I was headed your way anyway."

He was happy to have some company, and eventually admitted that he needed help crossing the busier streets. He told me about his most recent RAF reunion. "Only five men left from the old gang," he said. "Won't be long before we're all gone."

He returned to that melancholy theme one gloriously warm and sunny September day. He'd just attended the dedication of a memorial to the flyers who'd won the Battle of Britain, and told me how the cab driver had refused to take his money. "We owe you old boys more than we could ever repay," the cabbie had said.

"That was nice of him," I said.

"It was," Bob agreed, "but there aren't many like him anymore. Very few know or care about some long-ago war fought by a dwindling band of old and dying men. Our own Prime Minister, that bloody Tony Blair wouldn't even show his face at the dedication. He

knew he'd get an earful if he did."

I'd never heard Bob mention anything political before. "So," I asked, "you don't think much of the present government?"

That opened the floodgates: Bob was off and ranting. First it was about the immigrants. Britain has seen a huge increase in immigration in recent years. In our neighborhood you can see people from virtually anywhere in the world, but especially from Africa, the Middle East, and the West Indies. Bob was none too pleased about that.

Trying to calm him down, I told him about a recent visit to the doctor where I'd been the only English speaker out of 20 people in the waiting room. "And there I was," I said, "getting indignant about all these immigrants taking advantage of the National Health Service until I remembered I was an immigrant myself. So I guess I'm part of the problem, too."

"But you're not like them," Bob insisted. "You're white."

I didn't like the direction this conversation was taking. "I've found," I said in my best liberal voice, "that there are good and bad immigrants, and that both good and bad come in all colors."

Bob was having none of it. "My commanding officer took me aside at the reunion and told me that if he'd known what was going to happen to this country, he doesn't know if he'd have been bothered fighting to save it. And I'm afraid I have to agree with him."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Bob said, poking me in the chest for emphasis, "that I would have thought twice about risking my life to make this country safe for a bunch of niggers."

The word "nigger" doesn't carry quite the same meaning in Britain as it does in America—for people of Bob's generation, it refers not only to people of African descent, but to almost any dark-skinned person—but just as in America, it's not a word that's even remotely acceptable for white people to use.

So I tried to steer him off Portobello and onto a side street where we could have a more private conversation about his choice of words. But Bob has this habit of stopping in the middle of the sidewalk when he has something to say, and it's not easy to get him moving again.

"You know," he confided loudly, "I sometimes think that if it weren't for the Jewish thing, it might have been just as well if the Germans had won."

Well, at least he didn't think exterminating the Jews was a good idea. I tried to get him to see that members of other races might have good points as well, but he was adamant on the subject of "niggers." They had been and would be the ruination of Britain, he insisted.

I winced as he used the offending word again, as two husky black men dressed in US gangsta style went striding by. They either didn't hear him or didn't care, but when he said it a third time, a little boy of four or five, also black, looked up curiously at the angry white man.

I'd had enough, and, taking Bob by the elbow, propelled him down the street toward his house. He calmed down, and apart from telling me what was wrong with the Conservative Party (apparently it

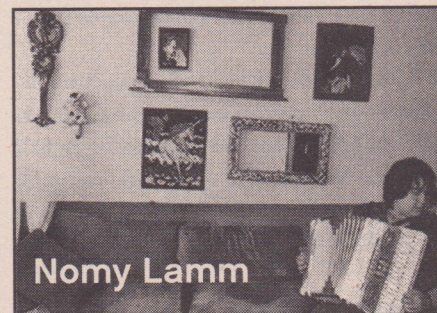
wasn't conservative enough), went back to nattering about airplanes and newspaper clippings and where he might go for his holidays.

I've run into Bob a couple times since then, and helped him find his way to the shops and back home again. He's been nothing but sweetness and light, with nary a word to say about immigrants or dark-skinned people. In other words, the Bob I'd always known before. The Bob I'd seen talking to black people or Asian people with the same courtesy and respect he showed everyone else. Had he just been having a bad day, or momentarily taken leave of his senses?

Or, more likely, could it be that Bob was a good guy with many admirable characteristics along with some unpleasant ones? And if so, what did I do about it? Cut off my friendship with him and stop helping him get around the neighborhood? Give him a stern talking-to about why certain attitudes weren't acceptable in the 21st century? Or cut the old guy some slack and stick to talking about airplanes and cars and war stories?

At one time, the answer would have been simple: I would have ruthlessly cut Bob out of my life, denouncing him as a racist and probably a war criminal to boot. But as another Bob once put it, I was so much older then. These days I don't have such a quick store of easy answers.

So I ask: what do you do? Demand perfection of everyone you associate with? Try to re-educate the elderly to your own standards? Or somehow get your head around the idea that a kind and gentle man, a war hero who helped save us from fascism, and an intolerant, racist shithhead can somehow co-exist in the same mind and body?



Nomy Lamm

I'm trying to come to terms with this weirdly dichotomous life of mine. Is this a real life? Is this sustainable? For days, weeks at a time sometimes, I see nobody, stay

holed up in my apartment alone with no TV, no newspaper, no neighbors, no partner, no job, no social scene, no schedule.

I spend my alone time bonding with my cat, struggling through crushes and heartbreaks, dealing with my chronic pain and addictions, writing, stretching, wanking, checking endless email, reading, dancing around naked, experimenting with makeup and costumes, drawing and painting, writing letters, playing with tarot cards and talking on the phone. I make up monologues, revisit childhood traumas, and endlessly, endlessly, endlessly, face my self.

I try to take care of my shit. Make sure I wash the dishes and scrub the tub when it's needed. Return phone calls. Work hard to get myself strong for the revolution. Yeah. Revolution. I was a Riot Girl, I internalized the Revolution at age 17 and have made it my life's work to

make it real. I know who I am. I could argue that my programming did everything it could to keep me from the reality of my revolutionary potential, my connection to everyone on this planet who is struggling for something real and free and connected. I could also argue that my path falls right in line with the work my parents tried to do themselves as young idealists. In any case, I work hard to be flexible, to quiet my mind, to empathize and energize, to be, as my friend Marcus sometimes reminds me, "in this world, but not of this world."

And then: Bam. I leave my bubble and I am in the world, thrown heart-first onto stages across the US. I can be found in the unlikeliest of places.

After a 10-hour drive, my band arrives in rural Tennessee at the Idapalooza Fruit Jam, a queer music festival held at an intentional community populated by Radical Faeries and other genderqueers. We are greeted by a drunk enthusiastic faerie who gets excited when he finds out we are a band. "Ooh! VEP's!" He exclaims, explaining that this stands for Very Enlightened Person. He shows us to our room and escorts us out to the back barn where a local singer/songwriter is playing a coffeehouse set.

We trek our way out there on uneven ground in pitch blackness with one flashlight between us. I step slow and careful with my cane, hoping not to accidentally fall in a rut and crack my leg in half (it's prosthetic, and yes, that has happened to me before on tour). "Are you OK? Do you need anything?" twitters the faerie, mostly to make himself feel better. "I'm fine, I'm just slow," I say, trying not to break concentration.

The back barn is swarming with people and we stand all the way in the back where you can barely hear or see the performer, which is sad because she is quite charming—an older lesbian who has been in the music industry for decades, her songs are playful and introspective, folky-countryish with sing-alongs and life lessons. I try to feel the vibe but am distracted by my physical discomfort. When I find a place to sit and move to occupy it, someone grabs at my arm and asks me if I am OK.

By the time an elderly gentleman steps up to shine his flashlight for me while I cut a slice of vegan cake, I have little patience for condescension. "What did you do to yourself?" he asks, pointing to my cane. "I didn't do anything to myself," I say, making it clear that's all I'm gonna say. He walks away without waiting for me to finish what I'm doing. I guess if I'm not willing to divulge personal history

to a stranger, then I don't need his flashlight.

Finally I notice someone looking at me in a friendly way that doesn't seem to focus on my presumed helplessness. Ah. He smiles at me and I stand near him, comforted by his presence. I check myself on the fact that he's one of like three black people at this gathering and maybe I was the one looking at him, not vice versa. He turns to me and introduces himself, says he's seen me perform before. He is warm, brilliant and chatty; he tells me about a feminist theory zine he's working on and recounts his experiences in Olympia and Chicago (the two places I'm from).

We talk about the beauty and peace of this land, which is one of dozens of intentional communities scattered throughout the hills and hollows of Tennessee. The woods here are crawling with hippies, queers and idealists. In fact, I was born on a commune, not two hours from here. The first time I came here I was astounded at the connections. The one lesbian in my parents' group, Linda Kubek, had spent time here too and was cared for by numerous faeries prior to her death. She herself was present at my birth.

We discuss Hurricane Katrina, barely a few weeks in the past. There are about twenty New Orleans evacuees staying at Short Mountain, the Radical Faerie land nearby where my new friend lives. He tells me and my bandmates about some frustrations he's been having with them.

"I'm glad we can provide a sanctuary, that's part of why we exist, and we try to be prepared that when shit goes down people will come to us. But think about it—who was able to get out of New Orleans?" We all know—white people with resources. "You wouldn't believe some shit I've heard," he laughs. "Like, 'New Orleans was in need of a cleansing.' Oh yeah? What kind of cleansing?"

An old friend appears out of the darkness; her whole family is from New Orleans and lost everything. She tells us about the fucked up things her white family said while safely out of the battle zone and watching footage on TV. When she leaves Tennessee, she plans to go home and survey the damage and do relief work.

By this point in the conversation I am wiped. We choose to skip the midnight "Unhappy Hour" performance, held in a treacherously inaccessible creek bed, and return to our room where we smoke and make up fake sitcom theme songs until we pass out.

The next day is beautiful. I sleep in, eat the predictably dry and bland communal food, shit in the adorable composting toilet that's

built to look like a gingerbread dollhouse. I eat "special" cookies and get an amazing free massage from a very talented body worker. I give an ex-lover a tarot reading about the current relationship, eat some mushrooms called "chicken of the woods" that seriously taste like chicken, and then it's time to play.

The stage is hand painted and the audience is adoring. We cope with the crappy sound and revel in the natural surroundings—twilight, fresh air, and hundreds of shades of green—that make these faeries into what they say they are. We get called back for two honest-to-god encores and my heart bursts when everyone jumps to their feet and dances their asses off.

As soon as it's over we are back in the car, beginning the 10 hour overnight drive back to Chicago.

The next night in Chicago we play the Beat Kitchen, a sadly under-attended record release party for a haunting art-rock duo who take themselves very seriously on stage but seem to have forgotten that "record release party" means there should be some records for sale, maybe a celebratory ambience. The audience seems to like us but they are of the over-catered to, straight indie rocker variety, who have so much entertainment available to them that it doesn't occur to them to give anything back. Oh well. The sound is good and despite the blank, stupefied stares of the spectators, I get good feedback when I get off stage.

Towards the end of the night I'm approached by a drunk little white guy who tells me he's gonna get us signed. He barely even tells me he likes our music, just that "there's something missing, we can fill it in with keyboards or something," and that he thinks we can all make a lot of money. I stare at him blankly. I later find out he's been hounding our manager all night. At first he actually thought she was me. After all, we're both fat, and we all know that fat people all look exactly alike. He eventually decides we are sisters, and tries to kiss our hands. I smack his hand hard when he holds it out, flip my palm over for him to give me five. He looks at me confused and finally goes away.

There's one more date on this three-state mini-tour. We leave early in the morning and head up to Ann Arbor, where we are playing a mainstream gay festival called Outfest. It's partially sponsored by Coors, among others, and we laugh with low expectations about the smattering of gays who meander around the mostly deserted market square. We watch some very talented and stylish gay bagpipe players, and a gay marine who advocates for inclusion in the military as well

as for gay marriage. I'm happy to hear his perspective but not particularly moved by his message.

The band that plays right before us is called the Fundamentalists, it's two 40-something year old boyfriends wearing matching outfits, using a synthesizer and other fancy equipment to do techno renditions of songs like "Nothing Compares 2 U" and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." We appreciate their earnestness and are touched by the queer youth in the audience, wearing their tie dies and Hot Topic pants, dancing like crazy because, hey, it's something to do.

The guitarist makes a heartfelt but trite anti-Bush statement and then says "so get out and vote in 2008!" I'm saddened by the disconnect, the idea that there's nothing to do until it's time to vote again. We all know how much good voting did in the last two presidential elections. Besides, if you're paying attention, every moment is a struggle to resist the racist queer-hating life-sucking woman-raping war-machine. I laugh it off and get ready to get on stage for the third night in a row. Three days is nothing, really, but the overnight drive really took it out of me and I'm glad this is the end of it.

We are surprised by the crowd that gathers for us, and inspired by the queer youth who become instant fans, waving their cell phones back and forth in the air. Apparently this is what kids do now instead of waving lighters. Wow. Afterwards a few of them ask for our autographs, saying "I know you're gonna be famous."

The next morning we eat at this restaurant called the Bomber that everyone told us was so amazing, but when we get there it's basically a World War II museum and everything they sell has meat in it. We eat what we can and drive the five hours back to Chicago.

And here I am again. In my studio apartment, where I am free to play games like "try to get out of the house before sundown" and "try not to smoke pot until you've left the apartment and come back home again."

I crash. I always do.

Try not to fall too far into the pit of self-indulgent misery.

Strive to be at peace with my solitude.

The days stretch out ahead of me like infinite emptiness, a complex web of money woes and bad habits as my primary occupation.

I love my life. I really do. ©

10:01 (an excerpt)

by Lance Olsen

Milo Magnani, assistant manager at the Mall of America, loves watching trailers for disaster movies. But he loves watching his clients watch them even more. From his seat, Milo can enjoy the view, not of the screen, but of the crowd sprinkled before him enjoying the view. Arms crossed above his generous belly, American-flag bowtie knotted beneath his chalky shaven wattle, Milo loosens his hold on his thoughts and finds himself back in Edina, Minnesota, site of Southdale, the first enclosed, multi-level mall in the States. His mother took him there for his eighth birthday in 1956, two months after its grand opening. Milo understood what he wanted to be when he grew up the second he walked through the entrance and beheld the awesome sight of 72 stores stretching out ahead of him. Shortly after that visit, Milo came to understand something else about himself: that, if he relaxed just right, he was sometimes able to slip behind the foreheads of those who had recently opened themselves up to the prospect of diversion. Right now, Milo is sliding into the cold hazy awareness of the old guy in the wheelchair at the

far end of his row and apprehending that the ghost of his wife has just stopped by, leaving behind a small residue of love, like a gold earring, before going away forever. The teenager in front of him is named Miguel Gonzalez, and Miguel Gonzalez is wondering why humans possess souls, if this is an example of what having one feels like. The girl beside him is feeling guilty Miguel paid so much money for a lousy afternoon with her. In row II, a cop named Sid Münsterberg scratches his burning toes through the scuffed-up leather of his cowboy boots, theorizing people go to movies because they feel they are actually buying the time to watch them. Vladislav Dovzhenko stealthily reaches up and cups his own left biceps as if cupping the breast of a teenage girl from San Diego. In row 10, an anorexic woman kisses Cary Grant through her surgical mask, and Cary Grant whispers gently into her ear he prefers men, which, she knows immediately, is a lie. "We were just playing," Fred Quock tells his shocked father, "honest," to which his sister Leni adds hastily: "He made me do it, daddy. Freddy made me do it." Vito Paluso imagines each brief

shot in the experimental short he is making a heavy gray stone, his project to sew them together into a suit of rocks, which he will wear everywhere he goes; some people will say the suit makes walking a formidable task, but Vito Paluso believes it will also allow him to fully appreciate each step he takes. In row nine, Celan Solen resolves to drop in at Mona's apartment after the film because she told him she was going to be busy doing exactly nothing special all day. Next to him, Betsi Bliss experiences another slight dilation around her, reality a gleaming pulse, and reaches up to massage the flesh between her shoulder blades, anxious to see what her body's language has to say to her. Elmore Norman stands over his grill at Malaysian Madness, staring down at the veggies sautéing before him, mind blank as a burgled bank vault. Jerry Roemer leaps across his dewy backyard beneath a moonlit night like Baryshnikov in *Swan Lake*, 50 years younger and wearing nothing but pink socks and blue sneakers. Betty Roemer sits by her phone at 4:42 a.m. in her room at the Adoring Care Retirement Home in Sarasota, Florida, lamenting there is no one left alive in her experiential solar system to call. In row eight, Moira Lovelace looks forward to in-

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Keep those submissions rolling in—and please adhere to the following guidelines: keep your work around 1600 words or less, write your name and e-mail address on the story itself, and send files in rtf or doc format to ppfiction@yahoo.com.

roducing biquadratic polynomial expressions to her junior math class tomorrow. Thirty feet above, the mouse skittering through the warm darkness of the ventilation system stops dead in its tracks, sensing the presence of a cat somewhere below it, then hurries on its infinite way. The cat, having already forgotten the pain in its side, wanders beneath Garrett Keeter's seat and eases onto its haunches, unaware as it licks its right paw that by crossing the highway in two hours and 40 minutes it will force Garrett's car into a deadly skid. Garrett sees Jaci's and his silver BMW start gracefully and inexorably easing across the lanes into the sparkling lights of oncoming traffic, and jerks out of his doze, thinking: *stupid dreams*. Jaci smiles at nothing, catches herself, and stops. Ryan Moody the lesbian actor sits with a cold towel wrapped around her face in her dressing room in an alternate universe, crying lightly over her lover who just slammed the door behind her in a fit of hormonal pique. In row seven, Jeff Kotcheff crunches down on a handful of chips hard as he can, hoping to annoy the kike slumped in front of him. Josh Hartnett huffs to himself in unconditional anonymity and places slightly more weight on his left buttock than his right. Anderson Bates contemplates

how, if you look across the Grand Canyon, you are really seeing the other side as it appeared about one 10,000th of a second earlier. In row six, Arnold Frankenheimer finds himself all at once unnerved, trying to remember whether or not he wiped that file of the college freshmen and the German Shepherd from his hard drive before turning off his office lights and walking. Stuart Navidson stops counting backwards because he has drifted asleep. Kenneth Jehovah falls in love with Julia Ward Howe's astonishing intellect once again. Lying beside Christopher or Brian or David after making missionary love in the dark, Lara McLuhan says in her little girl's voice: *Tell me again, daddy. Tell it to me one more time*. In row five, Lewis Smoodin surreptitiously slaps himself stingingly across the face and in a flush of shame prays no one noticed, then reaches inside his coat. In row four, Lily Grodal catches herself wondering briefly how big her neighbor Anderson Bates's cock is, reddening in embarrassment, disbelief, and alert interest at the idea. A gentle affection inflates inside Athena Fulay for the man seated before her. Susie Carbonara strolls through Camp Snoopy, reveling in the cotton-candy snowdrifts and wishing *she* could be that creative. Juanita Chamorro

decides she will begin her long hike back home tomorrow morning. In row three, Kate Frazey is a limp puppet piled on the side of a dark road. Rex Wiggie decides his next lyric will involve both a falcon and a fish, and grins at his lyrical acumen. In row two, Lakeesha Johnson runs out of things to say to the no one on the other end of her cell phone and brings to a close the conversation that never took place. Chantrelle Williams's stomach burbles and she steals a glance at Desria to see if she heard. Desria Brown stands with her hands in the pockets of her hooded sweatshirt, cold air leaking from her nose and mouth, watching a crumpled-up Starbucks coffee cup skip down the windy sidewalk in front of her, hop off the curb, and spin farther and farther up the vacant street. Milo Magnani glows with quiet pride, gives their thoughts back to these people, and, straightening his bowtie unnecessarily, rises to depart. Around him, throats clear, feet scrape, candy wrappers crinkle. The world grows brighter and brighter and brighter. Milo waits. The film begins. ©

Bio: Lance Olsen has published sixteen books of and about innovative fiction, most recently the hypermedia version of his novel *10:01* in collaboration with artist Tim Guthrie at www.cafezeitgeist.com/1001.html.

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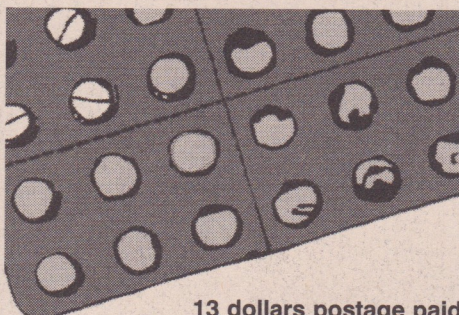


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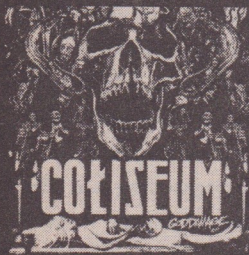
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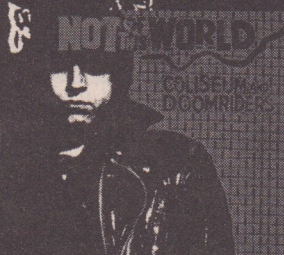
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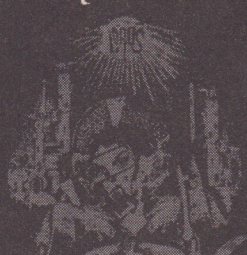
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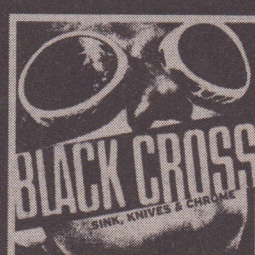
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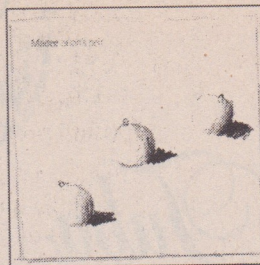
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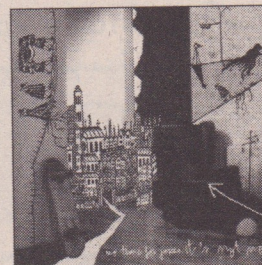
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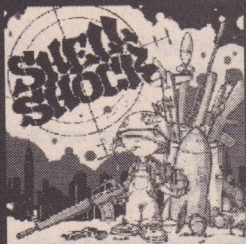
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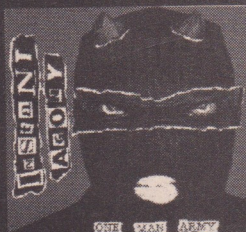
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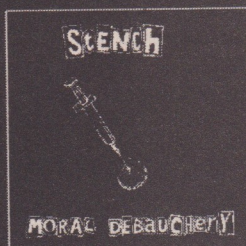
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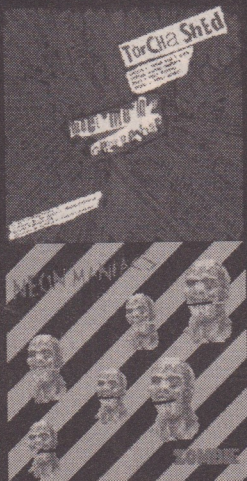
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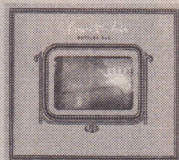
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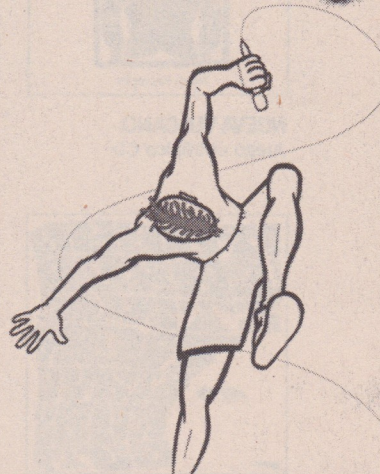
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Kick-ass novel about discovering punk rock. This well-written book is instantly recognizable to any punker. - *Alternative Tentacles Records*

Salad Days is a beautifully told story. I don't think I can come close to doing this book justice in such a short review, but please, trust me, it's fucking fantastic and I can't recommend it highly enough. - *Electrocution Distribution, Australia*

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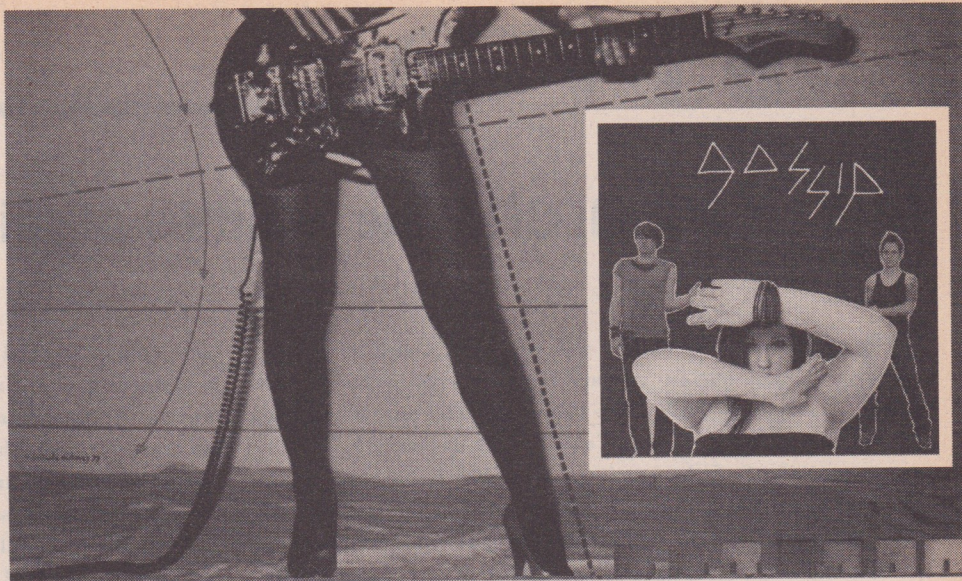
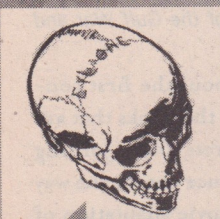
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DIY Research: the realities of military service

By Brian Boies

Between the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and missed recruitment quotas, military recruiting has received a lot of attention lately. With troop demands only increasing, the need for a steady stream of new recruits is constant, and the money spent to find them only growing. But where does a person find resources to spell out the realities of military service?

Current long-term conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq place pressure on the military and their recruiters as well as recruits. In January 2005, the Marines failed to meet their monthly recruiting goal for the first time in almost 10 years. The Army National Guard missed its recruitment goal by more than 5,000 in 2004. The Army has lowered its standards for admission to let in 25 percent more high school dropouts. The Marines are offering a \$30,000 reenlistment bonus. And the military already spends almost three billion dollars a year on recruitment.

Recruitment is big business, complete with marketing plans and sales goals. In creating this article, I wanted to provide material that one could use to make rational decisions instead of emotional ones. A recruit should know that the recruiter holds no power or threat over them; a recruiter is essentially just another salesperson. The same way you would research buying a new computer, I think it's important to fully investigate this "sales pitch" too.

Before making the pivotal decision to join the military, a young person must gather as much information from as many different sources as possible. The following resources offer a wide variety of perspectives and information on the realities of military service. These items should be viewed with this message: all materials are biased from different directions, read them with scrutiny.

Demand for this type of information will only increase. The No Child Left Behind Act includes the stipulation that to qualify for federal aid, schools must provide students' contact information to military recruiters. Schools also must allow recruiters access to campus, including such mandatory activities as gym classes and other classroom presentations.

BOOKS

Ostrow, Scott A. *Guide to Joining the Military*. 2nd Ed. ARCO, 2003. In this pro-military overview of the recruitment, enlistment, and basic-training processes, Ostrow includes chapters such as "Your First Meeting with a Recruiter: Facing the Best Trained Salesperson on Earth," but ignores or minimizes many issues raised by other resources. Because of its pro-military slant, Ostrow's guide is best paired with other resources.

Ensign, Tod, et al. *America's Military Today: The Challenge of Militarism*. The New Press, 2004.

Coming from a critical perspective, this in-depth, well-researched

book looks into several facets of military service, many not mentioned in Ostrow's book. It includes chapters on military recruiting, basic training, letters from soldiers in Iraq, women in the military, gays in the military, the health effects of the use of depleted uranium in the battlefield, and a discussion of the possible return of the draft. One important section is called "Words of Advice If You're Considering Enlistment." Its useful index allows young adults to gather whatever information they need from this expansive text.

Mann, Monroe. *To Benning and Back: The Making of a Citizen Soldier "My Journals of Daily Life in U.S. Army Basic Training and Officer Candidate School-from Private to Second Lieutenant, from First Call to Lights Out, and Yes, Everything in Between"*. Unlimited Publishing, 2002.

This collection of mostly unedited journal entries claims to be "the first book which chronicles Army Basic Training and Officer Candidate School in a first person perspective, as it happened," and this is probably the case.

Several soldiers from both conflicts in Iraq have written memoirs detailing their experiences in the military, in and out of combat. All of these books speak of being undersupplied and of a frustrating disconnect between the ground soldiers and the military administration:

Swofford, Anthony. *Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles*. Scribner, 2003.

This well-reviewed and well-written book is about the first conflict in Iraq, and has served as a template for all the books that are below. The author thoughtfully expresses regrets about joining the Marines, not just for the immediate experience but for the way it changed him, made him "one of them." A movie adaptation of this book is in theaters now.

Buzzell, Colby. *My War: Killing Time in Iraq*. Putman, 2005.

Based on a blog he kept for a few months during his tour of duty in Iraq in 2004. The military shut down his blog after a few months.

Crawford, John. *The Last True Story I'll Ever Tell: An Accidental Soldier's Account of the War in Iraq*. Riverhead, 2005.

Disconnected stories leading to no conducive whole, much like his experiences in Iraq. A warts-and-all picture of Crawford's experience including dehumanizing descriptions of Iraqis.

Williams, Kayla. *Love My Rifle More Than You: Young and Female in the US Army*. Norton, 2005.

A memoir of the current Iraqi conflict and military life in general from a female perspective. The author was an Arabic interpreter who found herself inadvertently on the front lines of combat, where women are not supposed to be. She also briefly takes place in an Abu Ghraib-type interrogation.

Fick, Nathaniel C. *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

The author served in recent conflicts in both Afghanistan and Iraq. On retiring after two tours of duty he writes, "Great Marine commanders . . . are able to kill what they love most—their men."

Hartley, Jason Christopher. *Just Another Soldier: A Year on the Ground in Iraq*. Harper Collins, 2005.

This memoir is based on the author's wartime blog, for which he was punished by the military.

PAMPHLETS AND WEBSITES

Several political organizations run websites that contain printable pamphlets about military service. These organizations make no pretense toward objectivity. They raise several interesting points that go against the grain of standard military recruitment claims. One wonders what a military recruiter would say about these pamphlets.

"What You Should Know Before Joining the Military." The Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (Project YANO). www.projectyano.org
This pamphlet's strongest statistic: "In 2002 only 46% of enlistees in their first term were satisfied with the military way of life." Refuting the standard claims of recruiters, the pamphlet also suggests questions that a person should ask herself or himself before enlisting. It also offers other options for a career and finding funding for college. The site contains other similar pamphlets, some in Spanish.

"Do You Know Enough to Enlist?" American Friends Service Committee—National Youth and Militarism Program. www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm.
This pamphlet takes a psychological approach based on the following questions: "Will enlistment help me achieve my goals? Am I trying to escape my own problems? Am I willing to give up control? Am I willing to kill . . . and be killed? Do I have other options?" The AFSC main Web site also contains information about conscientious objection, Gay and Lesbian issues, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test, and the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC).

Center on Conscience and War. www.nisbco.org.

This website has information, advice, and opinions about selective service registration, conscientious objection, and the possible return of the draft.

G. I. Rights Hotline. (800) 394-9544 girights.objector.org.

This site and telephone hotline provides information to those already in the military about military discharges, grievance and complaint procedures, and other civil rights.

Citizen Soldier. www.citizen-soldier.org.

This organization is run by the author of *America's Military Today* (see above) and contains some of the same problems as the book in that it seems more focused on left-wing activists than potential recruits. It does contain a printable pamphlet entitled: "The Military Enlistment Contract and You: The Facts, Your Rights". This pamphlet is a good primer on how to deal with a recruiter whether one is interested in the military or just getting contacted by them. Their website also has information about resistance within the military and the possibility of Canada as a haven (it's not as simple as it was in 1960).

ARTICLES

Bigelow, Bill. "The Recruitment Minefield." *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 2005. www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/19_03/recr193.shtml.

This article describes a political science unit taught by the author in collaboration with Julie O'Neill, a teacher at Franklin High School in Portland, Oregon. The students, all seniors, share their experiences with military recruiters. Included in the article is a PDF of a difficult-to-obtain enlistment contract used in the unit, which recruiters won't let prospects, parents, or teachers take home. The class analysis of this "scary" contract shows that it allows the military to do almost anything without a breach. Two students' reactions to the contract: "How can one sign a contract that is always changing?" and "How can the Army focus so much on honor but not agree to honor agreements?"

Bronner, Michael. "The Recruiter's War." *Vanity Fair*, September 2005.

The author interviews 10 current and former recruiters. There are tales of recruiters telling recruits to get off prescription medications and lie about the existence of medical conditions including asthma, ADHD, and a heart murmur. There is mention of recruiters encouraging mothers to give up custody of their children in order to enlist. The article contains this startling fact that should be known by every person (and/or their guardians) affected: "In June, the Pentagon went a step further, contracting a private marketing firm to compile a database of high-school students aged 16 to 18 and all college students—listing personal information from birth dates to Social Security numbers, grade-point averages, ethnicities, e-mail addresses, and interests—to help identify potential recruits."

Dobie, Kathy. "AWOL in America: When Desertion is the Only Option" *Harper's Magazine*, March 2005. www.harpers.org/AWOLinAmerica.html

The author of this article spends time with several men who are currently AWOL. She was able to contact these men through the

GI Rights hotline. She reports that as of March 5,500 plus personnel have left the military since the beginning of the current conflict in Iraq, a large increase over the past 10 years and that GI Rights hotline calls are up from 17,000 in 2001 to 33,000 in 2004 and the majority of these calls are people who want to leave the service. The article draws to an end with advice from Douglas Smith of U.S. Army Recruiting Command "recruits need to read their contracts carefully before signing them; if the recruiter's 'possibilities' are not written into the contract, they don't exist."

Special Note: If you cannot find print versions of these magazines go to your local public library and a librarian will most likely be able to locate these for you in a database.

CHAT ROOMS

A good way for youth to find out what military service is like is to chat online with those who are currently in the armed forces. Here are three of the several sites available:

Look for "Military Room" under "Government and Politics" at chat.yahoo.com.

forums.military.com/1/OpenTopic
www.military-quotes.com/forum

AUDIO-VISUAL RESOURCES

Army of One. www.redstorm.ca/armyofone and www.filmwest.com

This award-winning feature-film documentary directed by Sarah Goodman follows (for two years) three recruits who join the military after the attacks of September 11. Coming from diverse backgrounds, they have vastly different experiences in the military. Thaddeus was a stockbroker but September 11 inspired him to quit and become a soldier. Initially gung-ho he ends up deeply regretting his decision to join the Army due to its tedium (he becomes an Army truck driver in rural Georgia) and ability to take away one's individuality. He is resentful of his recruiter, that despite the fact he was more than willing to join the service that the recruiter was still not honest with him about the realities of service. He contemplates suicide and faking homosexuality. Nelson, the second main character in the film, is from the projects of the Bronx. He joins to gain respect and to become a member of the "world's biggest gang." Charismatic and bright, he seems like an ideal soldier initially, but after Christmas break during Basic Training he doesn't seem to receive the respect he feels he is due from his family and community. His enthusiasm crumbles to the point of going AWOL before Basic Training ends. Months later he reemerges in the Bronx very bitter about his experience in the Army. Sara, the final main character, joins the Army at the urg-

ing of her father without much enthusiasm. She struggles at first but soon finds herself thriving. At the end of the movie the conflict in Iraq has begun and she longs to go there. This film has no voiceover narration and makes strives to maintain a refreshing objectivity. There is an interesting "Where Are They Now?" feature on their website.

Gunner Palace. DVD Palm Pictures, 2005. Directed by Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein. www.gunnerpalace.com.

This documentary follows a group of soldiers over a period of time in Iraq. The soldiers live in Saddam Hussein's son's palace and participate in raids in Baghdad. The film has been hailed for its objective view of the war. The *San Francisco Chronicle* calls it "the best glimpse yet of what it's like to be in Iraq" and one young journalist calls it "the greatest film in the history of American cinema." The film starts out simply and makes these soldiers' lives seem almost fun and enviable but as time and the film go on complexities, horrors, and frustrations emerge. Truly engaging.

Occupation Dreamland. www.occupationdreamland.com.

This film is the grittier, slanted-to-the-left cousin of *Gunner Palace*. Filmed in Fallujah shortly before American offensive there of 2004. This portrays the troops as demoralized and bewildered by their experiences, the conditions, and the situation. There is a scene where the troops are pressured to reenlist. This scene gives the impression that the military is a cult-like institution that isolates the individual from the civilian world and presents itself as the only way of going on in life. There are sincere and eloquent testimonies against the war from soldiers, but after a while I began to wonder where were the dissenting views of members of the division.

Live from Iraq. Various Artists. CD. 4th25 Entertainment, 2005. 4th25.com. This hip-hop CD was recorded in Baghdad by soldiers, one of whom ordered \$35,000 in recording equipment and had it sent to Iraq. It claims to be "the only album ever produced, written, and recorded by soldiers at war—about war." Although this independently distributed CD has gathered few reviews in the mainstream press, it stands out as an important document of the war, illuminating the Iraq situation in the soldiers' own words and choice of medium. The soldiers state that they made this music, in part, to communicate what they were feeling in the situation. They found conversations and letters inadequate to convey the reality. Order from the website. ©

This article was originally published electronically, in August 2005, in a slightly longer version, on the website (<http://www.voya.com>) of Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) magazine.

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

My girlfriend and I are trying to have a long-distance relationship while she goes to school 1000 miles away. It seems to be working pretty well but she wants to do phone sex. I like the idea but I keep freezing up. Normally, I am pretty comfortable talking about sex and can talk dirty in bed, but once we are on the phone I get all giggly and don't know what to say. Any ideas?

Signed,
Homophone

Dear Homophone,

First I want to give you props for wanting to please your lady. It is great that she shared that fantasy with you and you are a sport for being willing to try it. A lot of people can freeze up when it comes to phone sex. Acting out sexuality with another person is one thing, but articulating a sex act is a whole different ballgame. Lots of people have no problem going down on someone but start to feel weird when they say "OK . . . now I am taking off your drip-wet panties." (Ew, did I just say that?).

One way to start the ball rolling without feeling so . . . oogy is to read erotica to her (or she to you). There are a lot of hot stories out there either in book form or on the web*. This way you don't have to come up with any fresh material and you can just rely on someone else's words. The trick here is finding something that you both will find hot. I have found that while couples can be very much in the same place as to what they like to do in bed, often what they fantasize about is very different. For example, someone can be very happy and secure in a hetero relationship but have queer fantasies. Or you can be a contented vanilla in bed and have wild S&M daydreams that you would never act on. This is a fantastic opportunity to ask your partner what he/she would think was a hot story. And of course you should share your thoughts with her/him as well. You may even learn that your shy GF has dyke-cowgirl dreams or your sexually aggressive BF fantasizes about five ladies with feather tickers. The point is to try and find something that will get you both going. And be sure to read the story to yourself first so you know how it ends and to make sure there are no surprises.

Another great way to talk dirty to your partner while taking

some of the pressure to come up with stuff off-the-cuff is to write down your own story. Think back to a particularly hot hook-up the two of you had and take some notes. Remember every detail that you can (and you can probably through in a few extras), just make sure you don't end up telling your partner a scene that happened with someone else. Nothing kills a mood like her/him realizing that you never did that together and that it must have been you and your skanky ex.

This is also a good time to tap into your fantasies about the future and make them known to your partner. While it can be hard to sit someone down and say "baby, I'd like to tie you up, drip honey on your parts, and lick it off while listening to the musical *Hair*," if you can spin that into an erotic tale to tell your partner, you may find that it has more of a chance of becoming a reality. Or at the very least you can have a chance to gauge your partner's reaction to your fantasy.

When you are ready to give this phone-sex thing a try set up a date with your long-distance sweetie. If you have call waiting, turn it off ("Sorry mom, I'm on the other line," can really break a mood). If you don't have one already, consider getting a headset for your phone as you might be needing both your hands along the way. Set a sexy scene in your house and make sure you will remain undisturbed. When you start to read/tell your story, speak slowly, quietly, and seductively. Anticipation is very sexy and rushing through the build-up can be a mistake. Also, even if you are doing this mostly for your partner's pleasure, don't forget to enjoy yourself as much as you can. Make sure some lube, towels and/or toys are handy so that if you find yourself wanting a release you won't have to interrupt the flow. And whatever you do . . . touch yourself while you are doing this, at least a little. Having some contact with your body will hopefully help you feel more connected to your story and your sweetie. And try not to drop the phone!

*Good erotic books: *The Best Women's Erotica* series, *Naughty Spanking Stories*, *How I Adore You*, *Aroused*. Websites: cleansheets.com, nifty.org, and literotica.com. ©

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DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

Aromatic and medicinal, ginger could be one of the most historically referenced spices. Allusions to the root can be found in ancient Chinese, Greek, and Indian writings. Ginger root is one of the most versatile of spices, hot and spicy in flavor and essential to dishes ranging from sweet to savory. It is also one of the best home remedies, providing relief from the common cold to nausea. It derives from a tall, iris-like plant of Southeast Asian origin, cultivated for its spice qualities. Since the spice stores and travels well, Arab traders brought the herb to the Mediterranean region in the first century AD, where its use quickly spread to northern Europe. It was most abundantly used in the cuisine of the Middle Ages, as a flavoring and in candied form. Around the 13th century, ginger became renowned for its aphrodisiac qualities. Eventually ginger became a global commodity when it was introduced to the West Indies by Spain in the 16th century. Most ginger sold now comes from Jamaica, India, Africa, and China.

The name ginger derives from Sanskrit, meaning "horn-shaped," or "horn root," which refers to the shape of this gnarled and bumpy root. It is a rhizome, or underground stem, that looks like a root but actually propagates by division, producing new shoots and roots from its stem. The perennial plant can reach four to five feet in height. There are many varieties of the root, ranging in color from green to yellow to red. The flavor is peppery, though slightly sweet with a pungent and spicy aroma. Ginger is available in a number of forms: fresh, dried, preserved, candied, or pickled. The root is used peeled—peel just before using—and chopped. To mince ginger, smash the peeled root with the side of your knife, and then chop finely.

When buying fresh ginger root, look for firm roots with smooth skin. Storage of ginger varies. Wrapped in plastic, ginger root can be frozen, then used directly from the freezer—just break off a piece to use and return the rest to the freezer. It doesn't thaw well, but will keep for about six months. Refrigerated, it will stay fresh in the vegetable crisper for two to three weeks. Peeled ginger can be stored in jars covered with sherry or Madeira and refrigerated for about three months.

The ginger-flavored wine can be used for cooking, though the ginger does impart some of the wine taste when used in cooking.

Preserved ginger takes many forms. Candied ginger is cooked in sugar syrup and coated with coarse sugar. It will keep indefinitely. Pickled ginger is often eaten between courses in Japanese cuisine, or served with sushi or sashimi. It is ginger preserved in sweet vinegar. Once a jar of pickled ginger is opened, it should be refrigerated. Powdered ginger, a much milder form of the spice, should be kept in an airtight container and stored in a cool, dry, dark space. It should

Ginger Beer

Ginger beer is a popular beverage in the Caribbean. It tastes like ginger ale, but with a stronger ginger flavor and this method of preparation doesn't include corn syrup like most ginger ale sodas. Wash and pound ¼-cup peeled ginger root. Put root in an enamel pot large enough to hold one gallon. Pour one gallon of boiling water over the ginger root in the pot. Add the juice of two limes and the grated rind of one lime. Add ¼-cup cream of tartar and stir well. When mixture is lukewarm, remove a bit of liquid to dissolve ¼-ounce yeast cake. Add to yeast to the pot and mix well. Cover and simmer on low for about six hours. Add sugar to your taste—for one gallon, about one pound of sugar. Bottle the mixture and refrigerate.

never be used as a substitute for fresh ginger in recipes. This form of the spice is most often used in baking.

For a medicinal use, try ginger tea. Add one teaspoon of minced ginger to one cup of water and bring to a boil for about three to four minutes. A light sweetener, like honey, can be added to lighten the sharpness of the ginger.

Juicing ginger is an easy way to keep ginger root handy for cooking. Finely grate fresh, peeled ginger root, then squeeze the grated ginger to extract the juice. Use the ginger juice as you would fresh ginger root in recipes. This provides a ginger taste to recipes without the stringiness of the root.

Preserved ginger is another quick use method for keeping ginger. It's used mainly in desserts, or as an accent to dishes. In a small saucepan place ½-cup very thinly sliced ginger root, ½-cup sugar and ½-cup water. Bring to a gentle simmer for about 10 minutes. Strain the liquid and repeat the process two more times, using the same ginger, but adding another ½-cup each of sugar and water. After the second round, reserve the final cooking liquid for storing the ginger. Store the ginger in its liquid in an airtight container in the refrigerator. ©

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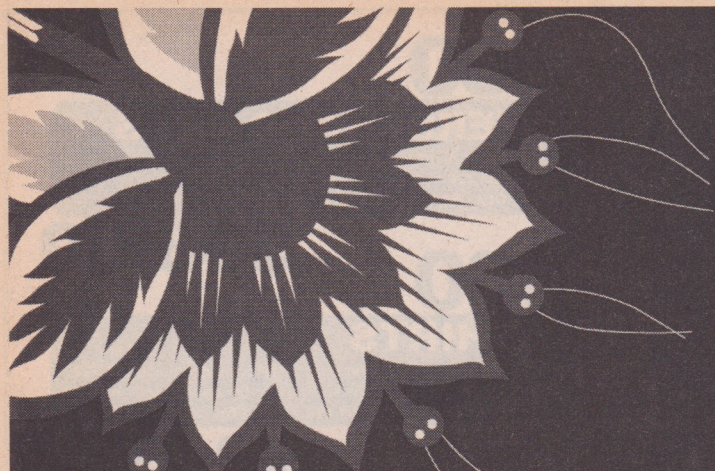
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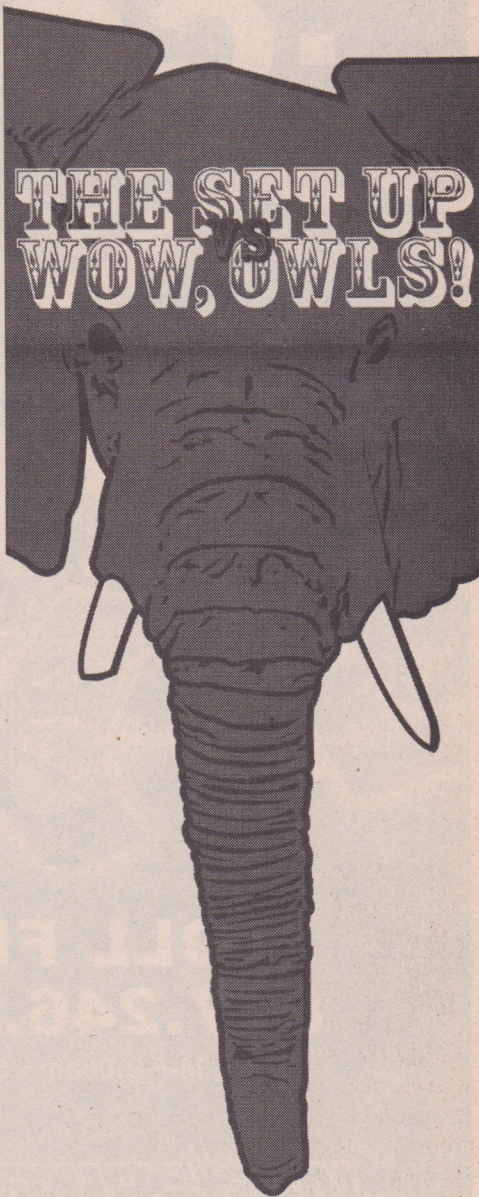
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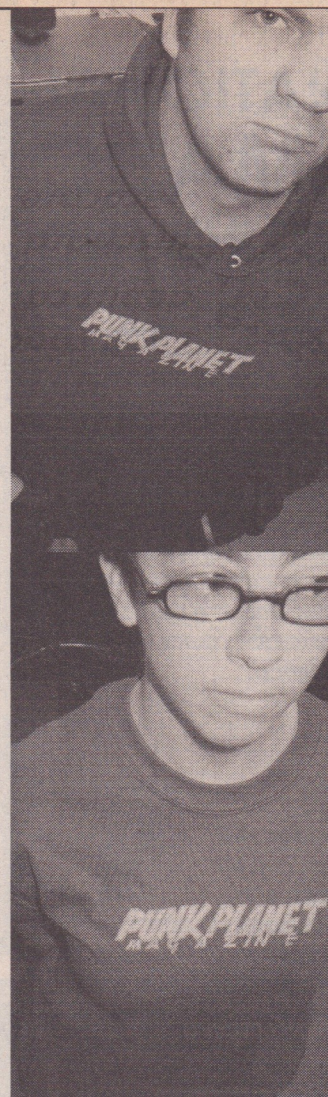
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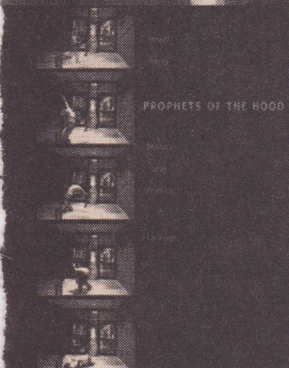
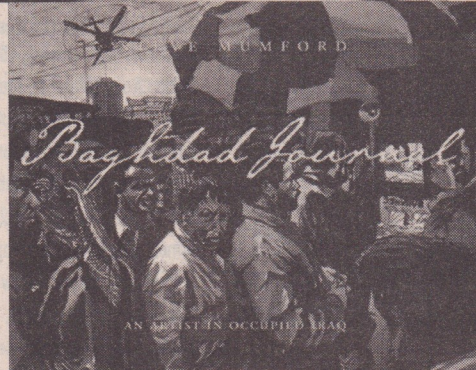
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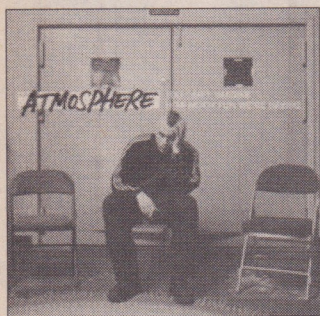


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REVIEWS

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MUSIC



Atmosphere – *You Can't Imagine How Much Fun We're Having, CD*

Hailing from Minnesota, Atmosphere's front-man Slug, the tortured soul of independent hip-hop, has been making music for the past eight years. His most acclaimed record, *God Loves Ugly*, released in 2002, is the definitive Atmosphere record: it seems to sum up everything that Slug and crew try to represent. Atmosphere's last release, *Seven's Travels*, was disappointing and failed to capture his

true sound. On his latest album, *You Can't Imagine How Much Fun We're Having*, Slug returns with an attempt at another *God Loves Ugly*. It's a tall order, and one that falls short as often as it hits the mark. The album begins with "The Arrival," a four-and-a-half minute song wherein Slug introduces himself, in a watered-down, cleaner-cut Jay-Z method, a la the *Black Album*. This repetitive, almost cheerleader-like feel ends with several samples of the most important word in Slug's vocabulary: "Atmosphere."

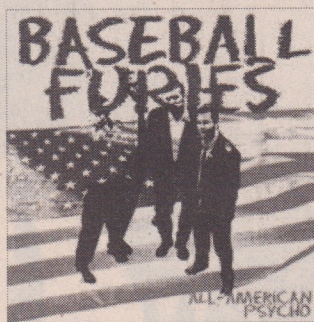
The next track, aptly titled "Panic Attack," is a dizzying spill of rhymes containing the memorable line, "panic attack / so what's the plan of attack?" Where are you going from here, Slug? Perhaps working so closely with Epitaph Records has deterred him from more typical hip-hop production or rhymes. Sage Francis, who also had ties with Epitaph, lost his niche on his most recent record, straying from his more conventionally appreciated underground hip hop. Could it be that Epitaph is a burial ground for the extreme talent of these artists? Or is it just a coincidence that both of their new approaches just aren't as good as their tired and tested methods?

That said, this record does improve a bit after its weak start about halfway through. Slug's rhymes seem to develop significantly on the album's second half, as he makes smart references to his hometown of Minneapolis, different parts of Chicago, and loves lost (and kept). He even tackles the tough subject of the rape and murder of a young girl outside an Atmosphere show in Albuquerque in 2003. On the track "That Night," this dark subject is made clear with the shocking line, "The music died that night in Albuquerque." Slug rhymes about wanting to go home and start a new life, wishing he could protect the kids. He bears all, saying that there is a part of him that keeps dying because of that night. Respect is due Atmosphere for producing this simple tribute to the 16-year-old girl from Albuquerque.

You Can't Imagine How Much Fun We're Having ends by tackling another issue: Slug's separation from his son ("Little Man (I Love You)"). The best track on the album, it develops nicely from the inclusion of two "letters" between Slug and his son. If Atmosphere could continue in this sort of direction, he would have a damn fine album on his hands.

It's no wonder how Atmosphere has gotten so huge in a world full of underground hip-hop talent. Making his music much more accessible to suburban kids than other MC's (rhyming about girls instead of the ghetto, for example), Slug knows what's going to sell and sticks with it. Overall, though, Atmosphere is making steps in the right direction, and this album's improvement over *Seven's Travels* can be seen clearly. (MB)

Rhymesayers Entertainment, www.rhymesayers.com



Baseball Furies – *All American Psycho, CD*

Part of punk rock's original charm was sheer thrill: that daring, teetering anxiety perpetuated by an extended adolescence and fueled by the collision of homemade speed and cheap beer. Any ideas of technical competence were eschewed for the intensity of the noise that can be battered out of a piece-of-shit guitar. While a good majority of us readers weren't of age when punk destroyed the status quo

with its romantic nihilism, we all can remember when a punk band spoke to that urge. Not to drop a dirty word, but garage rock is one of the few genres within punk to maintain this attitude about primal rock'n'roll. We all are aware of its current creeping revival, both in the underground and in the mainstream. There's no cross-pollination of punk with technical riffage, experimental electronic beats, or whatever available sounds out there that need a degenerate-inspired reworking. Some folks like it straight up like a neat glass of whiskey, and garage is perhaps the sub-genre least affected by "progress."

For the past few years, the Chicago-based Baseball Furies helped lead the pack of a burgeoning scene of sonic thrillseekers. Reacting to the arty seriousness of the pretentious postrock scene that dominated the city, bands like the Ponys, Functional Blackouts, Miss Alex White, the Tyrades (who share member Jimmy Hollywood with the Furies), Vee Dee, and plenty more have enjoyed a flurry of recent activity and garnered attention outside of the garage punk ghetto.

Hailing from Chicago by way of Buffalo, New York, this four piece create kinetic, pointed punk sharp enough to slit throats. When I first heard their debut LP, *The Greatest of All Time* (Big Neck Records), my initial thought was, *this is perfect*. Not only do they take their namesake from one of the greatest movies to come out of the 1970s, but the songs are tight, fast, and played with sheer reckless abandon. For every hellbound leap, there's a destructive crash. And it's all done somewhat coherently. Taking from late '70s hardcore punk (think the early Killed by Death compilations) with nods to Pagans/Dead Boys, they play with the lo-fi blazing intensity of Teenfenerate. I equate listening to the Baseball Furies to chasing a bottle rocket in a room filled with broken glass, razor wire, and a live electrical current. All while swallowing a fistful of steel wool. It's that raw and volatile.

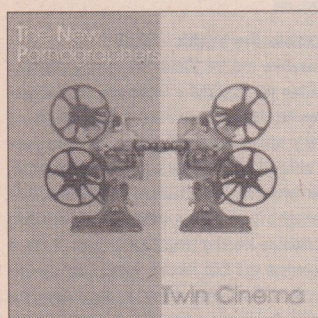
Hot on the heels of their latest full-length, *Let it Be* (Big Neck Records), this reissue of early recordings is simply a golden nugget of punk rock. Compiling the out of print and ultra-rare releases of 1998's excellent *Sounds of Mayhem 7"* and 1999's astounding *All American Psycho 10"* this CD documents the early makings of a phenomenal punk rock'n'roll band. And—as pretentious record snobs—we all know the early stuff is the best stuff.

I can only hope that this CD reaches the hands of many disaffected youth, letting them know that it's OK to let loose and fuck up. (VC)

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This issue's review team: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Eric Action (EA), Dan Agacki (DA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Mike Barron (MB), Anthony Bartkewicz (AB), Chris Burkhalter (CB), James Cardis (JJC), Mairead Case (MC), Jay Castaldi (JC), Vincent Chung (VC), Art Ettinger (AE), Eric Grubbs (EG), Kari Jensen (KJ), Ari Joffe (AJ), Scott Jones (SJ), Ryan Leach (RL), Justin Marciniak (JM), Sean Moeller (SM), Sarah Moody (SBM), Scott Morrow (SJM), Brian Moss (BM), Dana Morse (DM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Missy Paul (MP), Rex Reason (RR), Kyle Ryan, (KR), Matt Siblo (MS), Tony Stasiak (TS), Mike Vinikour (MXV) Edited by Dave Hofer (DH)



New Pornographers, the – *Twin Cinema*, CD

"Sweet sweet sweet sweet . . ." The New Pornographers' music is indeed sugary. Fortunately, it is also complex and substantial, crafted by a group—sorry, *supergroup*—of accomplished musicians who know how to keep the sweetness from becoming sickening. Are the New Pornographers deserving of the praised lavished upon them? Pretty much. Simply put, AC Newman and Co. know what the heck they're doing. While some

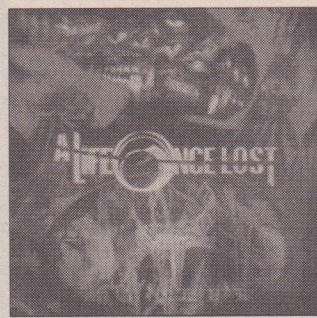
indie popsters believe that singing any melody over a few major chords makes for a dandy enough tune, the New Pornographers consistently manage to keep the vocal melodies and music interesting, and, more importantly, they keep it all enjoyable. Luckily for power pop connoisseurs, the band's latest effort, *Twin Cinema*, finds the band continuing to monopolize the melody market.

Though the album has its share of rollicking numbers, including "Use It," the first single (and the song that probably should have been the record's lead track), *Twin Cinema* is overall less energetic than the band's two previous releases. Yes, it is bouncy, and far more spirited than the vast majority of indie rock releases, but this one will likely provoke a bit less . . . err . . . go-go dancing than, say, 2003's *Electric Version*. Many of *Twin Cinema*'s songs glimmer rather than romp, and that's just fine, because they do so gloriously. The album's best track is the poppy but un-peppy "The Bleeding Heart Show," one of the 10 *Cinema* songs penned by Newman. The track is made particularly pretty by layer upon layer of "ooohh"s and "hey la"s, delivered mostly by Ms. Neko Case, who sheds half of her singer/songwriter title for her role in the Pornographers. Also lovely are "Streets of Fire," an acoustic-guitar-laden number, written by the band's other songwriter, Dan Bejar, (from Merge Records' Destroyer) and "Broken Beads," another Bejar tune, in which he sings about, among other things, his appreciation for "Suicide Blonde," all the while punctuating his thoughts with "la da da"s. In yet another stand-out track, the heavenly "Star Bodies," Newman's and Case's vocals alternate and then overlap before the song culminates in a blissful instrumental fadeout. Joyous pop perfection . . .

Given the scarcity of truly memorable pop albums these days, it's remarkable that the New Pornographers have managed to churn out three such releases. How do they do it? Through their catchy (and oft mysterious) lyrics and clever arrangements, of course. But a significant amount of credit for their success should also be given to Case's richly textured powerhouse of a voice, which is simultaneously heavy and airy, and seems to make any harmony stunning. Whereas other indie pop singers all too often venture into cheese territory or flirt with cutesy twee-dom, Case keeps the band's character intact, adding substance with every note. This is what helps *Twin Cinema*, as well as the other NP releases, to truly shine.

With *Twin Cinema*, the New Pornographers make it clear they've not lost their spark, and they appear to be in no danger of losing it anytime soon, as this spark is a result of the blending of exceptional talents. And talent, most certainly, is good. (KJ)

Matador Records, 625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, www.matadorrecords.com



A Life Once Lost – Hunter, CD

Eleven issues ago, I briefly reviewed this band's last record, *A Great Artist*. At that time, I felt it was basically Meshuggah-style, with entire songs revolving around intense, rhythmic, and crushing heaviness. While true, the time signatures were out of control, and the record grew on me rapidly over the course of the following few months. Like Meshuggah, there was more going on than was visible from the get go, and with limited time to lis-

ten to and evaluate the record, a lot of that went unnoticed until repeated listens opened my eyes to not only the intricacies of the album, but also the fact that *A Life Once Lost* (ALOL) was clearly taking things from a hardcore standpoint as opposed to Meshuggah's metal one. For that, I apologize. So after receiving this in the mail, I was stoked to give it a fair (and longer) listen. Before even listening to it, I was worried that the record would be either more of the same: totally complex, but without the pizzazz that made *A Great Artist* so fucking good, or totally different, abandoning what made them unique in a sea of shitty metalcore acts that all sound the same and, well, suck.

My fears went unjustified, though, thank god. From the opening drum fill of "Rehashed," these guys are on fire. The first riff of the album is similar to what was heard on *A Great Artist*, but faster and more grounded. Then, out of nowhere, it changes . . . then changes again. Soon after, it changes again into the chorus. The songs on *Hunter* are more structured overall than their previous work, but their uncanny style works well within verses, choruses, etc. The addition of said verse and chorus is something that was sorely needed. While most metalcore bands use a verse and chorus as a way to tell when their singer should be singing and when he should be screaming, ALOL use them constructively as a means to build on any given riff and somehow change it up a little here and there and keep things interesting. Have no fear: it's always heavy, even if it's a little more melodic.

The vocals change very little over the course of the disc. Almost always the same throaty howl, they act as the bait on the musical hook: consistently punishing, they're no match for what vocalist Robert Meadows is actually saying. "Vulture" is a good example: "I can promise you one thing / I will haunt you until you die / I can promise you one thing / I will hunt you until you die." Jesus. What about "Ghosting" for a breath of fresh air? "Habitual neurosis transcends / into thoughts of suicide." Good lord. OK, what about the title track? "Malice now exists inside my head / crush and rebuild." Wow. Someone's miserable, but it works perfectly with the despondent tunes. Also of note is drummer Justin Graves. The amount of foot control this guy has is uncanny. With the guitars continually chugging out bizarre rhythms, he's somehow able to keep the bass drums on the accented portions of said riffs, adding to their prevalence on the album and just making them that much more crushing.

Production wise, *Hunter* is unremarkable. The instruments are all mixed well, but other than sounding fine, the recording does little else. It's basically there to convey the music, but stays the hell out of the way. The overall effect is one where the low end is especially obvious (as that's the most important part of ALOL's style), inducing much head-bobbing, stoner style.

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Eric Acton (EA)

Siouxsie and the Banshees, *Love in a Void / Mittageisen*. The fourth single for Siouxsie and the Banshees was *Love in a Void / Mittageisen*, and was released in late 1979 as a double A-sided single. Spanning several decades and numerous lineup changes, Siouxsie's career had three musical periods: punk, goth, and alternative/wave. Their first few singles and full lengths are classic late seventies punk, with an ear and finger pointing in the direction of the goth to come. Primarily a singles band with their best work out on 7" and 12" EP's, Siouxsie often chose different songs for the 7" and 12" versions. So Siouxsie fans had to be relentless in their collecting to get all their best stuff. Without a record player, you are going to have to get this single off of two different releases, the recent box set of B-sides, *Downside Up* and the excellent *Once Upon a Time: the Singles CD*. Anyone who grew up in the '80s had at least one friend who tried to look just like Siouxsie and owned all of the band's releases on cassettes or records. As a matter of fact, I married mine! I didn't really appreciate their music until this single hit my ears. On one A-side, their best pop song, "Love in a Void," blasts across and is Siouxsie at their punk best. While on the other A-side we find "Mittageisen," a very hypnotic beat song sung in German. Like many of their earlier albums, there is a lot to be interpreted in the lyrics, and I won't try to give you my thoughts. Anyone who never gave this band a chance because of the goth tag, I suggest you pick up either of the releases above to see what the fuss is really about. This punker has to admit that at times, Siouxsie and the Banshees may be a little too much, but at other times I admit they wrote some classic songs.

Five records to get me into the winter mode: Siouxsie and the Banshees, *Downside Up*; Detroit Cobras, *Baby*; Epoxies, *Stop the Future*; Ponys, *Celebration Castle*; Against Me, *Searching for a Former Clarity*.



Dan Agacki (DA)

Charles Bronson, *Complete Discography*. After my freshman year of college, I got an apartment with my friend Nicolai. One day, I walked past his room and he was listening to the craziest sounding band. They were called Charles Bronson. Like the actor? Yeah, just like him. I knew it was hardcore, but it was a kind of hardcore I wasn't familiar with. He told me the genre was called "power-violence." It seemed to fit. The songs were ultra fast with indecipherable vocals. At the time I dismissed it as too metal for my taste, but little did I know that a year later Nicolai and I would form a band based on the guidelines we extracted from Charles Bronson's songs: 1) No songs over 30 seconds. 2) Always have a sense of humor. We even ripped off their cover art and replaced Charles Bronson's gun with a Tab bottle. I feel that the truly great bands are the ones that make you want to be just like them. The two disc discography is in chronological order, so you can see their progression as a band. They started out as a moderately fast and sloppy hardcore band and became one of the fastest and funniest bands around. They were at the top of their game with their tracks off the *Possessed to Skate* compilation and their *Youth Attack* album. As far as hardcore goes, *Youth Attack* should be regarded as a classic of its time (1997). There was a seemingly endless stream of bad power-violence bands in the mid-90s and it's bands like Charles Bronson that kept that genre from becoming a total crap shoot. Besides, how can you deny a band with song titles like, "Phil Anselmo's Pain Burns in the Heart of my Little Brother," "Punching a Gift Horse in the Mouth," and "I Can Never Write too Many Songs About Morons Like You"?

The story of my life: Flaming Lips, *Finally the Punks are Taking Acid*; Clockcleaner, *Hassler*; Pissed Jeans, *Shallow*; Plimsouls, *One Night in America*; Penny Arkade, *Not the Freeze*.



Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Blonde Redhead, *Melody of Certain Damaged Lemons*. Here, on *Melody of Certain Damaged Lemons*, the damage is not in the disjointedness of the music itself, but in the thematic trajectory of the album—the connection and disconnection of lovers, friends, and acquaintances. Imbued in the pretty disorder of the entire album is the obsession and loneliness both hidden and apparent in such relationships. More accessible, moving away from the no-wave limitations of near complete disintegration, *Melody of Certain Damaged Lemons* is pointed in the sexiness and tension of its songs and their parts. The falsetto of Kazu Makino can be both comforting, in the innocence of her coo ("Hated Because of Great Qualities"), erotic, and entirely alluring ("In Particular"). The group emanates sexuality in the tension of the vocals, most notably by Amedeo Pace, as well as Makino. Simone Pace's rhythms—their erotic movement, slowing building—provide the base for the foreplay-like melodies that erupt than retreat. In contrast to the trance created by such rhythms, there are moments of childlike happiness in the keyboard and synths of "Ballad of Lemons" and "This is Not," playing out the paradoxes of the album and the intensity / collapse interplay it turns on. And as it changes, happiness / promise turns to sadness, as is in the ballad, "For the Damaged." From melancholia to chaos ("Mother") to acceptance ("Untitled"), *Melody of Certain Damaged Lemons* ends, only to make a quiet, brief melody out of the larger tensions between people.

Listening to: Little Radio; Teenage Fanclub, *Manmade*; Four Tet, *Everything Ecstatic*; New Pornographers, *Twin Cinema*; Trin Tran.



Bill Angelbeck (BA)

Gastr del Sol, *Upgrade & Afterlife*. Listening to college radio, I first heard this driving at night, and the song was delicately hypnotic: it had an unusual sense of time that seemed more akin to an Indian raga but was coming from an indie band willing to explore riffs at whatever length was required. The piece was also quietly intense, as if things could erupt at any moment. I actually called the station to find out what this music was, figuring I would otherwise perhaps not hear this again. The song, at twelve and a half minutes, was the last one on this album, called "Dry Bones in the Valley." Long since disbanded, Gastr del Sol consisted primarily of David Grubbs and Jim O'Rourke, accompanied by various artists. For this album, Mats Gustafsson, Kevin Drumm, John McEntire, and Tony Conrad each contribute on particular pieces, as do others. Careful, clear guitar minimalism and infrequent lyrics frame exploratory pieces. In "The Sea Incertain," soft irregular piano patterns underlie what sounds like a tea kettle building to a boil, slowly and searingly coming to dominate in a noisy whistle. This album is a play, in point and counterpoint, between all of its minimalist space, erratic noise, bursts and unrestrained static. Parts of these tracks seem like a score for foreign silent films; most of these pieces are intricate and beautiful. This work hits that plateau between loose experimentation and beauty that in other works either too readily reigns back towards more mainstream familiarity or slopes towards the pretentiously masturbatory that few find engaging.

My own private radio: Bender, *S/T* (Reviewed this issue); Cloud Cult, *Aurora Borealis*; Black Dice, *Broken Ear Record*; The Bell Orchestra, *Recording a Tape the Colour of Light*; Wilco, *A Ghost is Born*.

Acid House Kings – Sing Along With, CD

Congratulations to the Acid House Kings. Their third album, *Sing Along With*, could've gone so wrong. First of all, the karaoke DVD that comes with this release could've been complete schmalz, but turns out to be quite charming. Second, their "I Can't Believe They're Not Scottish" brand of twee chamber pop could have very easily crossed the line into shameless Belle & Sebastian copycat territory. Instead, this Swedish quartet channels '60s girl groups to create infectious melodies, delicate vocals, and a sound so sweet, you'll immediately want more. The pure pop bliss is in full swing by the second track, "Do What you Wanna Do." The folksy guitar and backing handclaps give this song a sound that would blend in perfectly on any oldies station, sandwiched between the Ronettes and the Shangri-Las. The playfulness continues on the next track, "This Heart is a Stone," with female vocalist Julie Lannerheim cooing cheeky lyrics over tambourines and finger snaps. Later on "I Write Summer Songs for no Reason" and the disco tinged "Tonight is Forever," Lannerheim harmonizes effortlessly with male vocalist Niklas Angergard to give us the two best songs on the album. Coming in a close third would be one of the last songs, "A Long Term Plan." When the album comes to an end, around the 35-minute mark, it seems all too soon. Something so fun and so enchanting shouldn't end. This album is damn near perfect and one of the best I've heard all year. Once again, congratulations to the Acid House Kings. (MP)

Twentyseven Records, PO Box 7412, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33338, www.twentysevenrecords.com

Anthony B – Black Star, CD

Obligatory genre photographs are comical things. Think of all the carbon copied no-neck chuggers puffing out their pectoral muscles with Pit Bulls and Dobermans at bay. Think of all the cry babies with their perfectly messed up hair, eyes on the floor, bearing heart-wrenching expressions of sorrow that hint at the passing of a parent or lover, when really, chances are homeboy or -girl was just really torn up about the end of an epic Diesel Jeans sale. When it comes to reggae, the blunt shot is the pose of choice. Apparently, Anthony B likes to smoke weed. There's a picture of him blazing in casual attire and another of him doing the same in a very nice starched button-down. Visuals aside, the song "Marijuana, Come Free my Mind" is one hell of a tear-jerking narrative love affair. When I told the good folks at Punk Planet I'd review reggae records, maybe I should have studied up. I wish I could bait all you courteous readers with well-founded and educated jargon, but instead I'll state that listening to this record is harmlessly enjoyable. Let me attempt to sound qualified: Anthony B crosses non-threatening barriers and tweaks traditional methods with modern ones. On top of the straightforward reggae notions, there's prevalence of first wave ska and dancehall influences. Most importantly, I'd say that if I enjoyed smoking like Anthony does, I'd probably hit up the corner store for a Phillie and then blast this album 'til the bass made my bowels drop. Then I'd take lots of pictures of myself. (BM) Greensleeves, Suite 1203, 135 W. 29th St. New York, NY 10001

Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti – Worn Copy, CD

A one man lo-fi retro pop band. This guy plays everything himself except for drums, of which there are none. Instead of drums, the guy creates the percussion with

his mouth! You wouldn't know it from listening, as the homemade recording quality makes it just sound like a regular instrument that is poorly mic'd. The opening track, which clocks in at over 10 minutes, sounds like five different songs put together in a medley, and at times sounds like the guy is singing and playing keyboards over old Beatles and Who singles. In short doses, it isn't bad, but this album kind of wears thin about half way through. This "band" is probably better suited on 7" vinyl as opposed to a full length. (MVV)

Paw Tracks, PO Box 20368, New York City, NY 10009, www.paw-tracks.com

Awesome New Republic – S/T, CD

Everything and the kitchen sink (people playing a kitchen sink, possibly) is thrown into this Awesome New Republic pot, given a slow, two-handed stir and left to simmer up and cook itself into whatever shape it wishes. Moving from one track to the next on this experimental, hip-hop-rock-techno album is like walking through a haunted house, knowing there's something completely shocking around every corner. B Rob, E Robertson and John Hancock, friends from the University of Miami School of Music, do disco, making you believe that there's a white boy Earth, Wind & Fire. But then you hear them trying to do something that's more of a Hella version of Hall & Oates or Ricky Martin, and you almost have to think you're losing it. I need a drink. Something hard. (SM)

www.awesome-newrepublic.com

Beautiful Skin – Everything, All This, and More, CD

Collecting "B-sides, Outtakes & Rarities," this album recalls the best of the often moody bands that bridged post-punk and new wave (Wire, for one, is directly cited), although with more keyboards and perhaps with more of an eye toward the dance floor. This particular retro fad has gotten a little out of hand in recent years, but at their best ("Sex is a Triangle for the Perfect Square," "Lacerations," "Frontline"), Beautiful Skin make me forget about the legions of imitators altogether. And if you still haven't let your hipster guard down, allow me to point out that Beautiful Skin recorded all of these songs between 1998 and 2000, and broke up in early 2001—well before the post-Interpol boom. Some of the songs predate the band's lone full length album (including material from their first demo), and others come from the last days of the band. Typical of odds and sods comps, there are several misfires here, but at least half the disc is downright great. (CB)

Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, goldstandardlabs.com

Bender – S/T, CD

Bender is a London-based trio that delivers some powerful yet sedate pieces from a dark room somewhere. It has embracing guitar noise couched in the sullenness of Joy Division; they also rarely attempt to outpace Low. They are more expansive, however, with their range of instruments, incorporating viola, banjo, organ, and piano. The production has a weight to it that yields a cloudy bassiness, giving the sound a faraway quality. Most tracks are minimalist in treatment and rarely are backed by drums, though the other instruments are played percussively. On "Laugh With Me," the male/female vocals of Geraldine Swayne and Steve Gullick make for a nice pairing, underlain by hypnotic guitar picking and accordion—they trade the lead vocals throughout

the album. Little tracks like "Easter" are quite sublime, highlighting irregular string playing. "Amen Corner" is a noisy, hypnotic piece with soft clamoring and waves of unknown sounds. The closer, "Whitechapel 1887," is a cascade of sounds, drumming, and drony vocals, making it one of their more turbulent pieces. In all, these songs are potent and stirring, and come from a source that has a distinct sound and vision—they chart their own territory and make ground, which is all you can hope for in solid music. (BA)
 Satellite Records, 920 E. Colorado Blvd, #151, Pasadena, CA 91105, www.satelliterecords.net

Black Cougar Shock Unit – *Godzilla Tripwire*, CD

I love when a compact disc just jumps right out of your speakers. That sound that just grabs you, whether you like it or not. Black Cougar Shock Unit's newest disc, *Godzilla Tripwire*, is a weird mix of countless inspirations and sounds like at least six different bands on one disc. The only continuity on this disc is a massive guitar sound that pulls you in and an attitude that transcends typical turn of the millennium punks. When a band has veterans of other punk bands—Panthro UK to name one—and a great man turning the knobs, you can expect that there were mistakes learned from years ago. I love the song titles more than the lyrics, and a few standouts include, "There's Only One Hot Goth Girl at the Practice Space," and "Tofurkey Is Faux Turkey." What's great is that on an outside level it appears that most of the titles of the songs have nothing to do with the actual songs. Fans of guitar-heavy punk will love this blast of a disc. The vocals are gruff in all the right places and the hooks remind me of the best parts of a classic band like Swiz. (EA)
 Newest Industry, Unit 100, 61 Wellfield Road, Cardiff, CF24 3DG, UK, www.thenewestindustry.com

Black Sunday – *Tronic Blanc*, CD

Alicja is the most productive person in punk rock these days. After the break-up of the Lost Sounds it was easy to see that she would not slow down. *Tronic Blanc* has 13 tracks ranging from garage-y, poppy, and straight-out punk. Given that the record contains songs that were worked on over several years while she attended to her many other projects, some may be put off by the wide assortment of sounds. It feels if you're listening to a singles compilation and not a complete record, and that's actually a godsend in this case. I am not sure that a disc of one sound (in Alicja's case) would be good. The fun of not knowing what to expect is what makes the disc a great road trip-like adventure. Never resting in one place and giving you a four pronged attack is an achievement that is hard to pull off. Is this her band of the future? Considering that most of all the instruments and vocals are her own, I don't see Alicja taking this on the road as her main act. A jack of many trades, *Tronic Blanc* is probably just another notch in her bed post of musical adventures. (EA)
 Ditrnap, 2615 SE Clinton St., Portland, OR 97206, www.ditrnaprecs.com

Blowfly – *Fahrenheit 69* CD

In the '70s, Blowfly's XXX-rated funk and R&B probably shocked some folks (uptight honkies, most likely). In 2005, it's a little like hearing your uncle tell ancient dirty jokes. But there's nothing wrong with dirty jokes, and guys like Blowfly, along with Rudy Ray Moore, can lay legitimate claim to influencing the "nasty rap" of NWA et al. *Fahrenheit 69* takes an idea back from modern hip-hop records, but unfortunately it's the idea of padding a

record with a bunch of skits to fill out the running time. Without the skits, this thing would be an EP at best. The music is the same '70s R&B with a touch of garage-punk influence from the new backing band. Some guests show up to lend Blowfly support; Slug from Atmosphere sounds at home on "The Great Debate," but some of the other cameos... Afroman? Gravy Train!!!? Next time around, might I suggest contacting Mick Collins, Kool Keith, and the ghost of Ol' Dirty Bastard. (AB)
 Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Blusom – *The Fundamental Drift*, CD

Offered as a companion to their recently released full length the *Metropolitan*, Blusom have released this EP as digital download only. While similar in tone to *The Metropolitan*, the *Fundamental Drift* has a slight tendency to shift gears rapidly, making it feel like leftovers instead of a cohesive product. But what the EP lacks in continuity, it makes up for in Mike Behrenhausen and Jme White's songwriting skills. "American Walkabout," underneath the sparse and dreary accompaniment is a wonderful pop song with a deceivingly strong hook. "The Convincer" is just as effective, yet drops the grand movements of its predecessor, instead utilizing dense vocal distortions to make its mark. The band's only real misfire here is "Splendid Candor," a clumsy attempt at electronica that sounds a bit too much like Aphex Twin to suit the layered melodies the band has just built up. For those about to download, we salute you! (MS)
 Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084 Kansas City, MO 64141 www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Bomb, the – *Indecision*, CD

I always avoided the Bomb because I figured they couldn't stand up to vocalist Jeff Pezzati's old band, Naked Raygun. While I feel I'm right, it was a much closer call than I had expected. Pezzati's vocals and lyrics are still top notch and the band features the rhythm section of the Methadones, who put in a stellar performance. I won't even compare this to Naked Raygun. In fact, it reminds me of a band that I hold nearer and dearer, Jawbox. "Indecision" and "Hardly Shed a Tear" sound like they could have been outtakes from Jawbox's classic, *Novelty*. It's no surprise to see that J. Robbins (Jawbox, Burning Airlines, Government Issue) produced this. He did a great job. I seriously feel like a fool for overlooking this band for so long. They've written a truly amazing record, start to finish. All killer, no filler. What we have here is a contender for record of the year. In fact, it's probably one of the best records of the past few years. (DA)

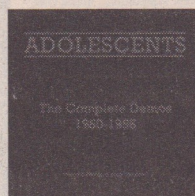
Thick, PO Box 351899, Los Angeles, CA 90035 www.thickrecords.com

Boston X – *S/T*, 7"

This is kind of ridiculous. The band members' names are anonymous, but we know they're from "Well-known Boston straightedge bands." I really expected this to be better coming from those credentials. The music is run of the mill and the lyrics are super cheesy. The new Project X this is not. "Hey, did you pre-order the Hammer Bros. 7"?" No? Well this is only available for people who did. Sorry, we just wanted to put out another rare record that isn't worth its weight. (DA)
www.str8true.com

A Life Once Lost, though suffocating in their intense density, are a breath of fresh air in the metal world. There's obviously no attempt to copy what anyone else is doing, no attempt to cash in with a radio friendly tune, and no attempt to be anything but themselves. Hell, they're not even ashamed to put pot leaves on their T-shirts and other merchandise. More than the album being amazing, *Hunter* is great for what it stands for: a positive step forward in a quickly stagnating genre. (DH)

Ferret, www.ferretstyle.com



Adolescents, the – *Complete Demos*, CD

The Adolescents' *Blue Album* is one of the great early '80s punk records that is often overlooked. In fact, if you don't own it, put down this magazine right now and go to the store, online, whatever, and pick it up. Yes, it is that essential of a record. A classic, a must have... your shelf is embarrassing without the disc living by your Against Me records in the "A" section of your collection. What to make of *The Complete Demos* though? Are they as essential? Well, of course not.

Demo collections are rarely essential to anyone except the diehard fans of the band. The sound quality is always suspect, live tracks add nothing, and most unreleased songs stayed hidden for a reason. I would love to say that the *Complete Demos* is an exception, but I can't. I love hearing a classic track like "Amoeba," in its early, raw form, but I don't suspect many of you will. I sat down and really listened to this and as a punk music historian (why not?), I loved hearing differences between the various line ups and versions. Tape hiss, warble, and microphone overloads abound. This definitely sounds like all those nth generation tapes that we traded around in the '80s. Hell, this is nothing to get that excited about except for a great studio track that I have never heard (and believe is unreleased) titled "Richard Hung Himself." I would have bought this release for this one track alone, so why don't you just order this along with the *Blue Album* and enjoy it for what it is worth? Warning, though; the later Adolescents release *Brats in Battalions* is a riskier proposition and should be listened to with metal ears. (EA)

Frontier Records, PO Box 22, Sun Valley, CA 91353-0022, www.frontierrecords.com



Bold – *The Search 1985-1989*, CD

This marks the second issue in a row where I have gotten to review a discography of a truly classic hardcore band. Last issue it was Judge, and now, Bold. They put the "youth" in youth crew, playing their first show when they were only 13 years old. Originally, Bold was called Crippled Youth. They released the *Join the Fight* EP under that name. It's very Youth of Today and SSD inspired and the vocals have that Ray of Today / Springa feel to them. While the lyrics were what you would

expect for their age, the music is more than competent thrashy hardcore. Next in line was their first release as Bold, the *Speak Out* LP. It's not as fast as *Join the Fight*, but it's more developed musically, and the obvious Youth of Today influence is kept to a minimum. In the liner notes, they remark that the studio didn't know how to record a hardcore band. It definitely shows. Years ago when I first heard *Speak Out*, the production is what kept me from really getting into it. The drums have a ton of echo and sound pretty horrible. But bad sound couldn't keep a song like "Nailed to the X" from becoming a straightedge classic. If it wasn't for the botched production, *Speak Out* may have been THE youth crew full length. They had great music and above par lyrics, but couldn't quite make it up the hill. The release that put Bold over the top is the *Looking Back 12" EP*. It first came out as a four song 7", and was re-released with three extra songs as *Looking Back*. Tom Capone from Beyond was added on guitar before this recording, and *Looking Back* is by far my favorite Bold release. The music is more technical and melodic, the vocals and lyrics hold strong... this is Bold fully realized. The sound on *Looking Back* is comparable to bands of the time like Vision, Turning Point and Verbal Assault. With every release, Bold made noticeable progressions. I can see how it happened... let's see someone else put out three records from middle school through high school and not change their sound drastically. Revelation can pat themselves on the back, because they did good on this one. (DA)

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232 www.revelationrecords.com

Defleshed – *Reclaim the Beat*, CD

I'll admit: I ordered a shirt from this band and asked if they would throw in a promo for review. Luckily for me, their bass player and vocalist Gustaf rules and obliged. I was first turned onto this band via my old writing gig for *Spontaneous Combustion* when we got a promo of their Metal Blade / Invasion Records disc *Under the Blade*. For a three piece, they made a lot of noise, and I've continued to follow them almost 10 years later. Although I don't think they've made it stateside for live dates, these guys

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Mike Barron (MB)

Lustre King, *Shoot the Messenger*. To be perfectly blunt, I feel like there are few records out there more perfect than this one. It's difficult to put into words exactly the effect this album has on me. Mike Lust's tight guitar work, sparse spoken vocals, and flawless production shine through, and join forces with Jay Dandurand's lightning fast drumming and Craig Ackerman's steady bass to form an indestructible trio... well, indestructible until they broke up in 2000. Jay had been described as the talent, Mike as the entertainment, and Craig as the looks. And that is definitive Lustre King right there. Lustre King is a head-banging, air-drumming sound explosion. But don't think they're all rock'n'roll all the time. No, no, no. Each track differs, switching between heavy guitars and bass, and kicking into a groove between the drums, bass, vibes, and turntables. This variation between songs is what separates Lustre King from other instrumental math rock bands. The track "Asia Minor" ends with the most incredible CD skipping effect that leads directly into the next song without a moment's hesitation. "Transit Must Suffer," the sixth track, contains probably the best drum part I've heard that I yearn to be able to play. While truly being a live band, Lustre King is captured well on this record, which far exceeds their EP, *The Money Shot*. But did I ever get to experience Lustre King live? Nope. That was before my time, friends. If, somehow, I had gotten into Lustre King at the age of 12, then maybe I would have been able to see them. But alas, I did not discover the sweet, sweet sounds of Lustre King until a couple years ago. A sad shame, I know, but at least I have *Shoot the Messenger* to remember them by. (MB)

Sounds that get my feet movin' or chillin' or rockin': Hot Cross, *Fair Trades & Farewells*; Sufjan Stevens, *Come on Feel the Illinois!*; Diverse, *One AM*; Antony and the Johnsons, *I am a Bird Now*; the Jesus Lizard, *Goat*.



Anthony Bartkewicz (AB)

Genius / GZA, *Liquid Swords*. In 1993, the Wu-Tang Clan came out of nowhere (Staten Island) and practically took over the hip hop industry for the next couple of years. After the success of *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*, solo LP's by the Clan's individual MC's started to come out one after the other. Method Man had the pop appeal and Ol' Dirty Bastard had the most out-there persona, but in '95 the Genius AKA GZA dropped the best Clan-related disc ever. GZA was the oldest member of the Clan (pushing 40 nowadays), and on *Liquid Swords* he sounds like an elder statesman, a guy who's seen it all and whose stories happen to come out in rhymes. Most of the dialogue samples come from the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series, in which a rogue samurai goes on the run with his infant son in tow; fitting for an album where the theme of youth falling into the lifestyle of guns and drugs and their consequences comes up over and over again. As one rhyme goes, "Shorty's not a shorty no more / he's livin' heartless / regardless of the charges / he claims to be the hardest individual / critical thoughts / criminal minded / blinded by illusion / finding it confusin'." Musically, this is one of the most evocative hip-hop albums ever. The production (all handled by the RZA) sound like winter, duels to the death, and lost innocence. *Liquid Swords* also features my favorite hip hop song ever, "4th Chamber," on which Ghostface, Killah Priest, RZA, and GZA all turn in some of the best verses of their careers.

Clan-related records two through six: 2. Wu-Tang Clan, *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*; 3. Ghostface Killah, *Ironman*; 4. Raekwon, *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*; 5. W.A. Wu-Chronicles II; 6. Ghostface Killah, *Supreme Clientele*.



Chris Burkhalter (CB)

The Human League, *Travelogue*. The Human League's second album greatly improves upon the formula established on their full-length debut, *Reproduction*. Almost entirely shaking the Kraftwerk homage bit, the quartet took simultaneous steps toward radio-friendly synth pop and haunted cybergloom. *Travelogue* finds the band's sound at its most flawlessly realized, the infectious beats and dark keyboards blending perfectly into an ominous whole that feels industrial, even if it generally sounds closer to dance music. But the lyrics... "I feel my spirits fly / only after dark..." "Your life is like a schedule / you run to meet the bills / no one's awake to tell you / Life kills!" Wincingly mawkish, yes, but the sophomoric evocations of urban malaise, Cold War distrust, and hackneyed science fiction play better alongside the music's anxious pop pessimism than more careful songwriting ever could. Unclear and exasperated, the expressions of unspecified discomfort with the world we live in are at times as affecting as the best apocalyptic crust anthems. My personal favorite from the album, "WKJL Tonight," is nothing short of an elegiac masterpiece. The lyrics nostalgically long for a DJ's voice to break in between songs on a corporatized radio station, but it seems to me what's really at stake is the frustrated struggle to identify and reverse the cause of a vague and overwhelming sense of disconnection.

September playlist, or goodies for loving, after all (by strategy): Ciara, *Goodies*; Cluster, *Zuckerzeit*; Daft Punk, *Human After All*; Brian Eno, *Taking Tiger Mountain* (by Strategy); Maja SK Ratkje and Lasse Marhaug, *Music For Loving*.



James Cardis (JC)

Holger Czukay, *On the Way to the Peak of Normal, Side 1*. I won't attempt to clarify or acknowledge the arguments about electronic music in general and this record in particular, but I feel it should be known to you, the reader, in the vaguest way, that they exist. However, the one truth about *On the Way to the Peak of Normal* is that it is, without question, my favorite record of all time. Czukay creates here something more substantial, more dense with sound and imagery than any of his earlier solo work. He describes the epic "Ode to Perfume," which takes up the entirety of side one, as "being like a trick film journey into the elaborate weavings of a Persian carpet." Though this may sound like a strained, pretentious statement to make about one's own production, I will say that what I love most about art of any kind is the ability it has to suspend doubt, for the audience to be completely taken in by the work of a master. Czukay counters that pretense, too, with his humor. He breaks down the musical marathon of "Ode to Perfume" into movements with titles like "Chorale of the Majestic" and "The Males are Marching." He encourages the listener to listen to side one "whilst roller skating, driving, or flying." The actual sound of the side is fairly similar throughout, with repeated passages played in various musical scenery. Samples abound, from the ambience to the leads, all complemented by Czukay's playing on various instruments and his efficiency with editing tape. The standout portion, to me, is the final "movement," entitled "Fragrance." It is much more sparse than the rest of the piece, but the one that really moves was perfectly transposed by director Lynne Ramsay in her cinematic adaptation of Alan Warner's novel *Movvern Callar*, in which "Fragrance" soundtracks the scene of a snowy, libidinous New Year's Eve party. The song is sinewy; it is slow motion, mind-expanding, body-moving, cosmic disco—it

Bullet Train to Vegas – We Put Scissors Where our Mouths Are, CD

In a review of their *Profile This* EP, I suggested that this band alter their obvious Drive Like Jehu reference of a name, and I'm dismayed that they refuse to heed my expert advice. It's obvious this band cares little about such extremely important aspects, because they've put a lot of time in to trivial things like their music. The demo was a solid piece of *At the Drive In*-ish rock and their debut full length follows in the same direction, spring boarding into further dimensions of, uh, post-punk—or that not-so-delicate balance between punk and indie rock. It was good before, and now Bullet Train to Vegas has delivered more of it. In terms of progression, it's much more adventurous than the EP; the guitars take on new textures, the vocals are more daring, and the songwriting strays from too many clichés. Yet it still maintains a familiar—or contrived, depending on your level of cynicism—tone that'll garner popularity. The album is a disciplined piece of work, and few bands today have the patience to write and then rewrite solid songs and then execute them flawlessly. (VC)

Nitro Records, 7071 Warner Ave., Suite F736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.bulletraintovegass.com

Burdocks – What We Do Is Secret, CD

Listening to this, I'm genuinely surprised that I've never heard of Burdocks before. This Halifax-based indie has all the polish and pedigree of a Modest Mouse or Built to Spill. And although their sound has a lot in common with those bands' early recordings (and, even moreso, Superchunk), these 11 songs are far from derivative and show the band making great use of an expansive sonic palette. Also, like those big names mentioned earlier, Burdocks are adept at switching quickly and seamlessly from fast and furious froth to more delicately rendered melodies. The band never strays from continually interesting songwriting and complex compositions, yet they're consistently accessible. This album is thumbs-up, folks, and Burdocks seems to have all the earmarks of a critic's darling. Strongly recommended to fans of finer indie rock everywhere. And if you're unconvinced, Burdocks conveniently offered several free full length mp3's at the website provided below. (CB)

Black Mountain Music, 135 Grant Ave, Hamilton, ON L8N 2X6, www.blackmountainmusic.ca

Chinese Telephones – S/T, 7"

This incredible lo-fi, high energy poppy punk 7" from Milwaukee blew me away. It includes four songs, seemingly recorded in a non-studio environment. A pet peeve of mine is a band using elaborate setups to achieve lo-fi sounds when the "real deal" is not only the obvious alternative, but also more likely to capture a genuine garage-y feel. Chinese Telephones made the proper choice and did it themselves, the old-fashioned way. Care was clearly taken to make this EP sound raw without sounding amateurish, and everyone involved deserves major kudos. Two of the four tracks are high speed, with the other two resting comfortably between slow and mid-tempo. The last song, "The Tank is on the Left," is a particularly impressive, aggressive mid-tempo pop gem. The only negative remark I can make about this record is that it arrived with a heartrending note stating that Chinese Telephones broke up after a mere year and a half as a band. It's not too late to get back together. (AE)

iDingus, 2407 N. Pierce St., Milwaukee, WI 53212

Coachwhips / Intelligence vs. Karate Party – Split, 7"

The main gimmicks of this split are the incredibly heavy vinyl (although the Institut double 7" released on Cold Meat Industries a few years back is one set that comes to mind which might actually be thicker) and the appearance of Chris Woodhouse, formerly of Sacramento spazz-rockers Karate Party, on the Intelligence side of the record, as well as in the role of producer. The Intelligence vs. Karate Party side is the better of the two here, featuring three songs of throbbing rhythms, gratifying guitar skronk and intermittent freak-outs. The Intelligence sound is full of bass and drum pop, while the Coachwhips' two tracks on the flipside are much thinner and less rhythmic. Organ leads take the place of the guitar, which remains somewhat imperceptible through these songs. Apparently, this may be the final Coachwhips release on vinyl, so you might want to get hold of one quick before eBay becomes your only option. (JC)

Omnibus Records, Omnibus Records PO Box 16-2372 Sacramento, CA 95816 USA www.omnibusrecords.com

Clue to Kalo – One Way, It's Every Way, CD

Straight from the land down under, Mark Mitchell, also known as Clue to Kalo, took two years to make this record. And you know what? It's actually quite evident. A rich blending of styles of everything from folk to electronic produced in a textured lo-fi approach brings everyone from the Books to the Postal Service to mind. There are portions of this record that are incredibly layered and beautiful, with delicate electronics combining with gorgeous keys and picked guitar. Mitchell's clean, smooth voice itself—while nothing exceptionally original—works perfectly in its layered context. "Seconds When it's Minutes" demonstrates the power of his voice, as well as his songwriting technique. Listen to this song, close your eyes, and let the dense melodies wrap around you from the first pick of an acoustic guitar to the count off of the pleasing, saxophone-filled track "Come to Mean a Natural Law." A normal downside to this type of music is that oftentimes the artist will "create" all the songs by using pre-recorded string or horn sounds, but Clue to Kalo uses nine musicians to include everything from flute to violin and cello. This extra work makes Clue to Kalo a step above the rest, showing us Americans how lo-fi electronic / folk is made in Australia. A tip of the hat to you, Mark Mitchell. (MB)

Dirty Loop Music, www.dirtyloop.com

Coquettish – High Energy Politics, CD

Fast ska punk from Yokohama, Japan with a pretty sparkly sounding record. All of the galloping drumbeats, angry vocals, and chicka-chicka guitars in the vein of early Suicide Machines and Falling Sickness are here (Suicide Machine Dan Lukacinsky produced this by the way), but I don't want to discredit this record because it has them. The production is clear and wide thus allowing one to hear everything (ska, punk, and hardcore clichés et al). While I'm not about to put my old Less Than Jake, Slapstick, and Mustard Plug records back into heavy rotation on my stereo, *High Energy Politics* reminds of the good ol' days of late '90s ska punk. Yes, there were some. (EG)

Asian Man, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

Country Teasers – Country Teasers Live Album, CD

I went into a record store earlier this week and saw Little

Eva's *Locomotion* LP on sale for 50 bucks. My broke ass couldn't afford it, leaving me devastated to the present (I'm getting misty eyed right now... no, I'm not joking). My sorrow has been intensified by this Country Teasers album. See, I fucking love Larry Hardy's record label In the Red. So much so that I have a fucking shrine with all of his record releases in my room. That being said, it hurts me deeply to give this In the Red Records release a "whatever" review. The Country Teasers are reminiscent of the Fall—nasal vocals and a couple of post-punk country tinged tunes further strengthen this association. However, this is just a live album of a bunch of dudes having fun in what sounds like a joke band. Fuck, why did Dave have to send this to me? I'm fucking recuperating from Little Eva and you bring it to my attention that In the Red has released a mediocre album? God, I'm hurting! Where are my Cartwright records? (RL) In the Red Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, intherecord.com.

Dexter Danger – *Hellaformia*, CD

With its superhero comic book artwork, this pop punk-lite band is actually enjoyable. The standard pop punk glossy sound is here but thankfully, there is a small breath of fresh air with *Hellaformia*. Dexter Danger isn't exactly a watered-down done of early '90s Fat Wreck bands, but they aren't trailblazing by any stretch of the imagination. Their songs have some sad emo melancholy sections, but these help break up the power chord-filled melodies. Yes, there's even a pretty ballad with strings and acoustic guitars, but it's OK with me. If it weren't for the joke rap hidden track at the end of this disc, I would have thought that *Hellaformia* was a relatively mature emo-tinged pop punk record. I guess it is, as long as I stop the record after the last proper track ends. (EG) Orange Peel Records, PO Box 15207, Freemont, CA 94539, www.orangepeel.com.

Doveman – *The Acrobat*, CD

Doveman's Thomas Bartlett does not sing as much as he sings along. Instead of sounding as though he's performing the 10 songs on the *Acrobat*, he comes off as though he's humming to the melodies in his head-whispered, aimlessly melancholic, and barely there. Thankfully, the rest of his band follows suit, drifting along with a similar looseness that ambles between folksy slow core and banjo-led throbs. It's a perfect marriage. And its offspring is a half awake tableau of sulking and numbness that manages to incorporate religion, earthy stuff (one track is titled "Clouds," while another is "Chasing Clouds"), and a distant ladyfriend in every turn. Not recommended for low attention spans, but for folks interested in tapping the mysteries behind Nick Drake-style storytelling, there just might be something palatable here. Pay extra close attention to album centerpiece "Boy + Angel," which takes about eight minutes to reach a pounding climax. (TS) Swim Slowly Records, 1011 12th St., Anacortes, WA 98221; www.dovemanmusic.com.

Dropkick Murphys – *The Warrior's Code*, CD

By my count, *The Warrior's Code* is the fifth studio album from Boston's Dropkick Murphys, and it doesn't disappoint in the slightest. What started out as a basement oil band progressed into something more mainstream than any oil-influenced band ever dreamed. The Dropkick Murphys seemingly tried to retain skinhead credentials by taking on Al Barr as their lead singer after losing

their original vocalist, yet their sound strayed further and further from its roots. Instead, they evolved into a Irish-punk-folk-oil amalgamation that your average skin would want nothing to do with. The songs are faster than on their last couple of releases, which bordered on cheesy at times. They've toned down the accordions, but haven't eliminated them, and they've kept up with their growing tradition of utilizing unused Woody Guthrie lyrics. For those craving more traditional oil, Barr played his first show in ages with critical band the Bruisers this past September. But for the masses, *The Warrior's Code* is a fantastic contribution to mainstream punk rock. While Dropkick Murphys will never again capture the feel of their early material, their now-signature Irish punk sound is endearing in its own right. (AE) Hellcat Records, www.hell-cat.com.

Empty Silos Echo War – *Semantics, 12"*

For once, a band's name actually partly suggests a description of what they sound like—not just some gimmicky or pun-laden juxtaposition. With a minimalist architecture to their songs, instruments playing often in isolation, one could imagine this band's sound as occurring in empty silos or with echoes from afar, maybe even from a war—who knows? They use an array of sounds in addition to guitar and percussion: organ, violin, and tape samples. The piano parts are perhaps the most intriguing contributions; they catch my attention like I'm straining to hear the playing from another apartment room. The songs are at times too disconnected for their own good, but the aim for such spaciousness does achieve its moments of chaotic grandeur. (BA) Rok Lok Records, PO Box 137, Rocky Point, NY 11778, www.roklokrecords.com.

Fatals, the – *Yeah Baby!!!, 7"*

The Fatals are a buncha smart kids. Clearly the Oblivions, Crime, and Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* are an influence. The reason I'm not stabbing myself with kitchen knives over this record is its lack of melody. The Fatals go too far with the "blown out amp recorded into a pawn shop recorder" aesthetic. To put it another way, the Fatals make the Mummies sound overproduced. I can respect that, but that doesn't mean I like it; it's analogous to my sentiment that Greg Cartwright excelled in the Reigning Sound and the Compulsive Gamblers—bands that stuck with the definitive lo-fi approach, but not for the soul sake of it. If you fall into the Oblivions camp and want even more punishment, the Fatals might be your thing. (RL) Zaxxon Virile Action, www.zaxxonvirileaction.com.

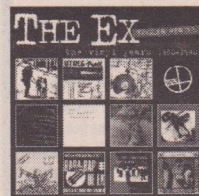
Fine China – *The Jaws of Life*, CD

To do my job better, I listened to this while washing my dishes the other day. Granted, what I was scraping cheese off of was just a regular plate and not my finest china, but there was still a bond being shared with this dreamy, Arizona three-piece. Deserts aren't supposed to breed such British fellows. America is not supposed to grow those here. But this atmospheric caper of moping tenderness is ours solely, with Robert Withem's pillow-y vocals drifting delightfully over Pixies and Smiths-ish guitars, capturing a reclining mood that can be found in the most overly nostalgic Nada Surf songs. No one's ever said that those Nada Surf songs were anything less than great, either. You see what I'm saying here. (SM) www.youmakemehatemusic.com.



ed greatly from. Finally, THERE ARE NO SOLOS. There's only three guys in the band, so it makes me happy that they're smart enough not to do that we-only-have-one-guitar-player-so-for-the-solos-it's-just-the-solo-and-the-bass shit that Pantera used to do (RIP Dimebag). This means that live, these guys must be just as punishing. The riffs stand on their own without the need of some weeee000EeEoooo noise to distract from the—dare I say—catchy songs and unrelenting nature of their music. It just keeps pushing and pushing until it unloads with some insane riff and blasts you out of your chair. Easily the most underrated thrash band out there, any fans of the "Swedish sound" should pick this up (or their last record *Royal Straight Flesh*) and prepare to start circle pitting in any of the following places: on the bus, in your car, in your living room, on the El, or at work. Also, kudos to the band for topping the song title "Lightning Strikes Thrice" with "Needless to Pray." (DH)

Regain Records, www.regainrecords.com



Ex, the – *Singles. Period. (The Vinyl Years 1980-1990)*, CD

This is a worthy project, gathering the Ex's early 7-inch releases, most of which were originally released in Europe (some from their own label, Hé Records, based in Amsterdam), in limited pressings. Often, a singles-based album is a jumbled, mixed bag of material, but this album is one of those that reveals the focus put towards each single. These "hit and run" releases, as they call these, make for a refreshing admixture in listening to their collection as an album. The Ex's staple qualities are all here: choppy, piercing guitars, plodding, angular drumming, pulsating bass, and stern vocals with pointed lyrics that aim at American imperialism, capitalism, and bureaucratic injustice. They have always had an intelligent political bent to their music, with lyrics as abrasive as their disjointed sound. As they write in the liner notes, these releases were considered "pamphlets, statements, political comments on current situations" throughout the decade. They have recorded songs about support for a miner's strike, criticizing police raids on Amsterdam squatter communities, and the anarchist Spanish Revolution. For those familiar with their recent, potent tirades, this material showcases a rawer, post-punk sound with the harsh edges present in a more direct, straightforward delivery, at least in the earliest tracks. One can hear the progression towards cacophonous complexity in the later art-punk pieces. The CD contains a sizeable booklet detailing each 7", its cover artwork, label info, and history. These releases include "All Corpses Smell the Same," "New Horizons in Retailing," "Utterpunch," and "Weapons for El Salvador." The last track is from a split single recorded with the Mekons in 1990, and Jon Langford also appears on "Gonna Rob the Spermbank." Lyrics are included, even for the couple songs recorded in Dutch. Since, none of these were released in the states, this album is—no question—an absolute must-listen for you Ex connoisseurs. And, for others, I couldn't think of a better introduction. (BA)

Touch & Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, www.touchandgorecords.com



Hatepinks, the – *Plastic Bag Ambitions*, CD

This French band makes me want to play music again, just for the chance to tour the United States with them. Comparisons to other frogs like the No Talents and the Splash 4 would be an easy way to go on a review of these Frenchies. Reality is not that easy though, because the Hatepinks have some chops, squeals, and attacks that start and finish in around 16 minutes. A confusing band to say the least, they've released their records (or mini-LP's, or whatever you want to call them) on several labels, with each label getting a few different tracks and vinyl getting exclusive songs. You need to be a goddamn anthropologist of musicology to have their entire short-lived catalogue. In reviewing their second "full length," *Plastic bag Ambitions*, I will say that any band that has a great opening intro track gets two thumbs way up in the air from this happy garage punker. The opening self-titled track (with cool spy themed guitar) is a classic attention grabber that must be their opening song live. From there they pull a rare move by fading into their track "Razor Lips." The vocals are mixed all over the place and overlapped / overdubbed to an extreme that helps define the Hatepinks and their sound. The drumming is once again the driving force of all 13 songs and 16 minutes, and with each song being so short, you have little time to realize if you are coming or going, but short songs don't

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

is everything the free parties of the '60s and '70s weren't but could have been, had someone like Holger Czukay been allowed to master the ceremonies.

Current Jams: Phil Ranelin, *Vibes from the Tribe*; Jackson & his Computer Band, *Smash*; Broadcast, *The Noise Made by People*; Gary Higgins, *Red Hash*; Jimmy Edgar, *Bounce Make Remodel*.



Malread Case (MC)

PJ Harvey, *Dry*. There is a feeling that comes when it's windy... when there are veins and spinal cords knobbing up the skin... when you grab coffee cups like life preservers and stare so long that he catches you doing it. In other words, there are times when the fire's done gone, and *Dry*, PJ Harvey's banshee blues debut, is at once exorcism and phoenix rising. Harvey is unmoved and unaroused by the boxes of the everyday; here, she croon-moans the aching anger to the tune of heavy, heavy drums and guitar tempest, tweaked time signatures, minimalist poems, and the *Id* on violin. Listen for the Cockney bite on "Plants and Rags," the voice snagging like barbed wire in a getaway; the near-sweet sparkle and command of "Happy and Bleeding." Let's be honest: I wouldn't have lived through high school without this record. Harvey is a paradox, a tiny white woman with Big Mama's sense of shit gone down, Kathleen's anger and spit with Stevie's veiled mysticism. Here, amid songs about angels and nudes, Harvey introduces the tropes soon to haunt her subsequent catalogue (on up to last year's badass dirge "Uh Huh Her"): *eros sans charitas*, scorned brides with pointy things, and decidedly un-menstrual blood. Kurt loved this album, and Michelle Tea wrote about fucking to it. The action is ironic and the verb, apt: hard, angular, and masturbatorily brilliant. I urge you not to listen in the rain.

Wrecked stockings: The Constantines, *Tournament of Hearts*; Cocolosie, *Noah's Ark*; Kinski, *Alpine Static*; Old Time Religion, 2012; Degenerate art Ensemble, *Rinko*.



Jay Castaldi (JC)

Minutemen, *My First Bells* cassette. My own personal introduction to punk rock pretty much went like this: The first punk record I ever bought was by Black Flag. The enclosed SST Records catalog led me to the *Blasting Concept* compilation, which led me to the Minutemen. I had never heard anything like the Minutemen before, nor have I since. Everything about them was just awesome. The songs were all short bursts of emotion. They wore their politics on their sleeves, and their politics went way beyond the typical thoughtless sloganeering of the day—the Minutemen actually provoked thought. *My First Bells* was a cassette-only release from 1985 that collected nearly everything the band had put out between 1980 and 1983; everything up to their landmark album, 1984's *Double Nickels on the Dime*. In total, *My First Bells* included two LPs, three 7-inches, one 12" EP, and three compilation tracks. A whopping 62 songs for a mere \$8. It's unfortunate that the notorious money grubbers at SST let this go out of print and never issued it on CD. Instead, they issued most everything from *My First Bells* (along with another LP and EP added on) spread out across a set of three separate CD's called *Post-Mersh*. Sure, this stuff all sounded better on vinyl than on cassette or CD, but it was that super-affordable, value-packed cassette that introduced me to the band and made me want to seek out the vinyl in the first place. (JC)

Top fives: The Busy Signals, *S/T 7"*; Swing Ding Amigos, *Kings of Culo*; Scharpling & Wurster, *Hippy Justice*; Toys That Kill, *Don't Take My Clone, 7"* (reviewed this issue); USS Horsewip, *Wants You Dead* (reviewed this issue).



Vincent Chung (VC)

Hellbender, *Footprint of the American Chicken*. To foolishly date myself, one band that shaped my adolescence was Jawbreaker. One cannot deny their influence at that time, as mountains of bands were emulating—well, trying to—their pop-punk melancholy. I read an interview with a local North Carolina band in *Under the Volcano* that got comparisons to—hey!—Jawbreaker. Hellbender from Chapel Hill? Never heard of them. But the Tarheel town's band climate was dominated by the Superchunks and Archers of Loaf and Pipes and Polvos, so the local press largely ignored bands outside of that clique (at least not until years later when *The Independent Weekly's* Karen Mann critically lauded Hellbender's second and final LP, *Con Limon*). It shouldn't have been a surprise, though. Hellbender had more in common socially within the DIY network with peers like Catharsis and Asstactor 4. I picked up the *Footprint of the American Chicken* at Poindexter Records in Durham, and after one listen, I knew I had my new favorite record. I taped it to cassette that night so I could listen to it on the bus to and from school. The album had extremely strong songwriting. The hooks were catchy, but not obnoxious. Al Burian's strained vocal work was contrasted excellently by Wells Tower's cleaner, more accessible style, and a lot of thought was put into the structure—meaning not a single throwaway track on the record. What struck me most about the album was how literate it was, at least for pop punk. They were similar to Jawbreaker, but instead of heart-on-your-sleeve sentimentalism for love lost, Hellbender sang about social alienation from every single fucking thing. Each song was a small existential freak out that centered on feeling awkward in forced attendance. They're not really fitting in, and not really doing anything about it. At the time, high school was a lot like that. Of course, I've since realized it's a feeling we never shake. And besides, Hellbender had a better vocabulary than Jawbreaker. Such writing was exemplified in bassist Al Burian's excellent zine, *Burn Collector*, which has gone on to much acclaim. He went on to form Milemarker and Challenger while drummer Harrison Haynes plays in Les Savvy Favs.

They're a lot better than eating urinal cakes: the Marked Men 7", *Righteous Jams*, *Rage of Discipline*; 13 & God, *S/T*; Negative Approach, *Ready to Fight*; Pedestrians, *live*.



Art Ettinger (AE)

GG Allin & the Jabbers, *Always Was, Is and Always Shall Be*. I've written about the social relevance of GG Allin in these pages several times over the years, but almost as interesting as the one-of-a-kind onstage terrorist GG Allin became is his early musical career as the front man of one of the US' most revered late '70s / early '80s melodic punk bands. Just when hardcore was eclipsing '77 style punk, the Jabbers were churning out willful, perfect, raw classic punk. The lyrics on *Always Was, Is and Always Shall Be* hint toward the misanthropic records that were to come for Allin, and the music is one of the better examples of a New York Dolls-obsessed band producing snotty glam punk that was even more potent than the Dolls' best material. Hits on this always in print album include "Don't Talk to Me," "Automatic," and "Bored to Death." Fans of

Fizzle Like a Flood – Golden Sand and the Grandstand, CD

Falling somewhere between the fun pop of the Flaming Lips and the utter ridiculousness of the Danielson Famile, *Fizzle Like a Flood* is part joy and part pain. Hearing *Golden Sand and the Grandstand* reminds me of the first few times I heard Space (best known for "Female of the Species"), as in, goofy sounding songs that have some really memorable melodies. The production sounds incredibly thin here, as there's barely any low end. The lack of low end isn't the litmus test for how good an album is (anyone heard the *Clash* or *Four Minute Mile*?) but with all the programmed drumbeats, keyboards, and guitars, there's very little in the way of density to the scope of the recording. This doesn't help the case for seriousness but maybe that helps the fun factor. I would recommend this for people who enjoy the music of Ween and Wally Pleasant, but I definitely wouldn't compare it to the caliber of those artists. (EG)
Ernest Jenning Record Co., 68 Cheever Place #2, Brooklyn, NY 11231

Floating City, the – Entering a Contest, CD

Several years ago, Radiohead consumed two current members of the Floating City. The two musicians displayed enormous potential and the creative hearts of Romantics, but to some listeners, they seemed to have fallen under the spell of bootlegged Radiohead MP3's downloaded to their OK computers. With the help of the other three members of St. Louis' the Floating City, they have matured musically and, for the most part, concealed the obsession if not all of the inspiration. *Entering a Contest* captures a rock quintet that thrives in the details. Electric piano throughout and vibraphone and synthesizers here and there explore the possibilities of the otherwise standard guitar, bass, and drums rock band. The piano and vibes shiver in several songs and create uncommon moods that open the structures and encourage experimentation. Opener "Kansas City" skips along until the refrain, when a second piano alludes to ragtime. The pretentiously titled "Oh, Laughing Girl upon the Brinke of Death!" is a suite that progresses from synthetic sounds and treated vocals to marching drums and rapidly picked guitar strings and then to a slow burn of bass and string instruments. The title track builds toward (and repeats) an interlude of layered guitars and wheezing keys that says more than a chorus filled with lyrics ever could. Indeed, the music diverts most of the attention from Gareth Schumacher's lyrics, which return to certain key words and create an inexact sense of alienation, mortality, loss, and unrest. The words become afterthoughts overshadowed by the refined instrumentation and detailed songs of *Entering a Contest*, a rather promising record. (JM)

First Flight, PO Box 21631, St. Louis, MO 63109, www.firstflightrecordlabel.com

Genuine Imitations – 22 Songs About Hampsters, CD

On the third track of this disc, you will find a song about how J. Edgar Hoover was really a "sexy lady." The band thinks songs like this are funny, which is why they made 11 of them for you to listen to. But here's the rub: they're not funny. It's entirely possible that they were entertaining for the band to make (or to giggle at while writing them), but that's about the end of the road on the humor here. Thus, the *Genuine Imitations* are just that: imitation of talent, imitation of ambition, etc. In fact, most of those things are just plain absent on this disc, and

with tracks like, "She's Drunk," "Drunken Office Party Guy," and "The Mall," you should have a good idea of what you're getting into here. Or rather, what you should stay away from. (SBM)

Self-released, www.myspace.com/genuineimitations

German Art Students, the – Namedroppers, CD

The German Art Students are, to me, a joke band that should have remained a joke. Instead, they chose to record an unintended punch line with their album, *Namedroppers*. Never mind the sappy, twitty, nonsense lyrics, most of which crib directly from the Ramones' songbook of "I don't wannas" and other similarly trite refusals and pleas. Never mind the ironic throwback style of 1960s 45 RPM pop they play. What's really unfortunate about the German Art Students is their compelling lack of heart. I do not demand overwrought emotion from every album I hear—the German Art Students address this confounding need directly with their song "Dick Clark (Ballad of the German Art Students)," in which an answering machine voice, purportedly that of the receptionist at Dick Clark Studios, states "Only navel-bearing teenagers and mope rocking pretty boys need apply." However, if the German Art Students choose to be cute, silly, and "fun" just for the hell of it, isn't that pretty much the polar opposite of the despairing singer-songwriters they so abhor? Don't just tell me "your Borg is Bjorn," (from the song "Bjorn Borg"). Instead, challenge me. Show me why this carefree take on life and art matters. Until then, I'm not listening. (JC)

Autobahn Music, www.thegermanartstudents.com

Gift of Goats – All I Think About is Blood 7"

At first glance of the rather cheap cover—the way the band's name is drawn along with the image—you'd think it is some sort of girly pop record. But if you take the time to actually see that the drawing is of people holding mutilated bodies, you might think death metal band, but you'd be wrong on both counts. Gift of Goats churn out some of the most sludgy, thick sounds I've heard in awhile. They are closer to a hardcore band than anything else, but they have a bit of noise rock element to them as well. The raspy vocals sound somewhat angry and the whole thing is pretty in-your-face at almost all times. The rather low-fi recording quality I think actually adds to the appeal, further proof that you can't judge a book by its cover. (MXV)

Omnibus Records, PO Box 16-2372, Sacto, CA 95816, www.omnibus-records.com

Golden Boys, the – Scorpion Stomp #2, CD

James Arthur should be as big as Jon Spencer. Look at his output to understand: *Fireworks*, *Necessary Evils*, *A Feast of Snakes*, and now the Golden Boys have some of the best garage slop tracks to ever connect from groove to needle. Granted, James "only" plays drums on this, but the band sounds as great as those classic *Fireworks* of past. The genuine love of a Lee Hazelwood cover can never hurt a record either. If you find yourself reminiscent of the mighty '90s garage explosion or are getting rather tired of your Dirtbomb LP's, then you should try out *Scorpion Stomp #2*. I was taken aback by how much I have loved this disc in the few weeks I have owned it. Supposedly this was recorded and mixed in nine hours. That is 11 songs in a workday! You can't get soul from hours of retakes, overdubs, and knob twisting. Robert Johnson didn't use Pro-Tools, and unless the Golden

Boys totally have me fooled, neither did they. This is a stomp, garage, rockabilly, hayride of a great time. (EA) Hook or Crook, 4219 Tanglewood Trail, Spring Branch, TX 78070, www.hookorcrookrecords.com

Goldrush – Ozona, CD

Goldrush has made an entire disc full of crunchy lo-fi pop gems, with plenty of tambourine bits and introspective lyrics for good measure. It isn't twee by any means, though there is something endearing about the naivete in their approach. The lead's voice is quavering but earnest, often enveloped in a sheet of reverb and momentary feedback. Their melodic prowess is best displayed on the charmer "Counting Song," and the faux-disco static of "Come On Come On" is addictive straight away. Most tracks end up turning into short-lived but intense, fuzzed-out indie jams, which round out the songs nicely. Ozona gets better as it goes on, which extended-jam-by-way-of-acoustic-intro "There's a World" displays, and repeated listens bring out the subtleties in the group's approach. Nothing revolutionary here, but still a great, understated pop record that becomes epic in moments, in its own small way. Highly recommended. (SBM)

Truck Records, 15 Perry St., Oxford OX4 3AA, UK, www.truckrecords.com
Better Looking Records, 11041 Santa Monica Blvd. #302, Los Angeles, CA 90025, www.betterlookingrecords.com

Gororotted – A New Dawn for the Dead CD

Grooving and grinding gore metal from the UK. Who guessed that these guys dig Carcass? They do the Steer / Walker low / high vocal tandem thing, but don't get all med-school on you with the lyrics. Actually, while it may seem silly to comment on death-metal lyrics, Gororotted interestingly focus on the psychology of extremely painful death rather than just describe the viscera in painstaking detail. Also, gore grind's typical misogyny is mitigated slightly here: the booklet photos do feature half of the band members visiting mutilation on gothic-clad models, but the other members are on the receiving end of the ladies' nooses and garrotes. Hey, it's a little bit of progress. (AB)

Metal Blade Records, 2828 Cochran Street PMB 302, Simi Valley CA 93065, www.metalblade.com

Gravy Train!!!! – Are you Wigglin?, CD

Everyone's favorite titty-bouncin' sequin-sporters are back, and equally ready to lodge themselves in your ears like a Tootsie Roll in grape candy. Happily, this isn't a repeat of 2002's *Hello Doctor*, although those craving raunch and horn will be well-sated indeed. There are still plenty of taco references, various kinds of mucous, and '90s pop jabs ("It's like Easter in your pants and everyone wants a Peep"), but also live drums and organ, Vibraslap and guitar. There's a Psychotic Pineapple cover, plus ditties about fake tans and disappearing boobs, roughly a dozen references to the beaver, and the best Johnny Angel song since Liz Phair walked into a Gap. Somehow, none of it's threatening, all of it's fresh, and most of it's the most dance-worthy thing since Le Tigre left town. Get some balloons, find your fishnets, and, to quote Chunx, Hunx, Funx and Drunk: "make the tabloids nuts." (MC)

Kill Rock Stars, PMB 418, 120 NE State, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Hank Jones – Saturdays of Thunder, CD

If you're into hardcore but don't like the negative turn it has taken as of late, Hank Jones is the band for you. The group readily admits to wanting to resurrect the

genre through a more positive outlook, while retaining certain aspects of their style, such as constant, thundering drums and the urgent vocals of Mike Torti. With an agenda such as theirs, they are walking a very thin musical fence but manage to create a mix that takes all of the typical features of the genre and puts an upbeat, energetic spin on them. Most tracks are well under the two-minute mark, but each song displays a unique structure (check "125 Chestnut") and manages to send out a positive message in the end. Both are impressive feats, to say the least. (SBM)

Undecided Records, www.undecidedrecords.com

Heavy Trash – S/T, CD

Heavy Trash is the new excellent side project of Jon Spencer and Matt Verta-Ray. The music here is all old style rockabilly like Elvis' early Sun sessions. This isn't the real fast psychobilly that some bands do but more of the "Be-Bop-A-Lula," grease in the hair, polyester suits at the prom type of affair. The recording sounds completely vintage all the way from the slapback echo to the slap of the upright bass. If I hadn't known better, I'd have believed this to have been recorded in '55. Spencer and Verta-Ray sing songs about girls, love lost, and Gatorade. This CD is a must have for all rockabilly fans. (SJ)

Yep Roc, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Hiretsukan – End States, CD

This is some damn impressive screamo/post-hardcore stuff here. The music is intense and intricate, in your face as well as soothing. It's also sonic and harmonic; the drums are killer and a complete pounding machine. Needless to say, this band could easily impress anyone at all, whether it was the first listen or tenth. Here it comes, the curve ball: while the band is amazing and can exhibit anger and sadness just through the music alone, it's the vocalist that surprises me. At first I thought, "This is some impressive screaming. You can make out what he's saying, but the vocals sound higher pitched." As soon as I looked at the band credits and photo, I was surprised to see this screeching voice was coming from a woman. Not burly or metal looking in any way, but the voice is almost evil. Her intensity is unbridled, and would easily win the respect of fans that enjoy the brutality of bands like Converge, Threadbare, or Grade. Impressive and fierce. (DM)

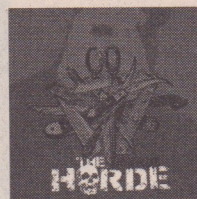
G7 Welcoming Committee, PO Box 27006 C-360 Main St, Winnipeg, MB, R3C www.hiretsukan.com

Ho-Ag – Prayer for the Worms, CD

Boston has always had a huge music scene, regardless of national recognition or not. This scene is so multifaceted that even the sub-genres have sub-genres. So, if I were to say that Ho-Ag is art punk, this wouldn't prove to be very descriptive, especially in their more primal and newer lineup. Sure, they have some weird themes that any proper B-movie would love to claim as their own like, "Batman vs. Dracula" or "Invitation to a Beheading," but they take the music seriously. The first time through seems more like a twisted trip to Candyland on 'shrooms, but their sound is such a controlled form of audible violence and humor, it's something that can be enjoyed by one with an ear for the innovated and also the obscene. This isn't experimental music that is played through a trashcan with electronic bleeps and bleeps, this is innovation and punk at its finest. Alternative Tentacles did a lot records with bands that had a morbid take on aggressive music, and, more

necessarily equate lack of structure. We have the verse, verse, chorus, verse variety on display. It's just that there's no filler, and the tempo is fast to keep everything short, clean, and to the point. If the Minutemen did garage rock, their ethos of telling your story and getting the hell out of the song would sound a lot like the Hatepinks. (EA)

TKO records, 8941 Atlanta Ave., #505, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.tkorecords.com



Horde, the – Join or Die, CD

Every time I tried to sit down and listen to the Horde, I found myself thinking about playing "World of Warcraft" instead, so I usually ended up doing both. Needless to say, I listened to this way more times than any other record this issue. This is heavy shit... way heavier than anything I have listened to in the last half decade. Nine tracks of sheer power, *Join or Die* has the emotion that was missing from bands who tried to play so hard and fast and lost me years back. Since the begin-

ning of rock'n'roll, the number one topic of songs has been girls, and even a hardass group like the Horde is no exception. Several of the nine tracks are about anger with girls and there are some mentions of guns. Some sample lyrics to make the point: "There's something in the air tonight / it's time to make this / it's time to make this happen / tear drops and powder burns / broken bones, imperfections / this might just be my heroin." You get the idea. At first this looks to be a record filled with clichés, but there is some craft to the lyrics. I normally laugh at a band that covers the Misfits; in fact, a great general rule is that if you put a Misfits cover on your record then you suck. Well, rules are broken once in awhile, and the Horde do a great version of "Queen Wasp." As good, or maybe even better than the original. This is not a disc I was expecting to like, and it's been getting me to pull out some great records from the past that I haven't listened to in a long time. Take what you will from it, but we were all young and angry once and it feels good to go back to that place in time. (EA)

www.1234records.com

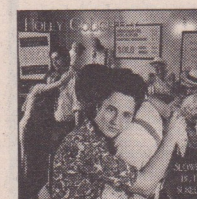


Human Eye – S/T, CD

Frontman Tim Vulgar from the Clone Defects has led his next band into your speakers. Well, the Human Eye doesn't really lead as much as lets it spill, explode, and rip through the magnets and cones that reproduce the sound. Much like the Clone Defects, you can tell right off the bat these are music fans first, musicians second. The hooks and grooves come from so many different sources you can't begin to list them. *Human Eye* is a very abrasive record to virgin ears of the noisier

side of music, and would be easy to dismiss as cacophony. Listen carefully, my friend; there is a lot more buried underneath this, and the mix will let you hear it if you take the time. In the Red Records has done little wrong in the many years they have been putting out records. *Human Eye* is a typical band on their roster; they have a sound that sounds so original, yet feels comfortable at the same time. Caution though, those who don't get bands like the Ponys, Pussy Galore, or the Reigning Sound will not have the acumen to appreciate the greatness of this self titled disc. The songs contain a criminal sound that leaves you feeling as though you've been pick-pocketed or swindled within the half hour duration. It's both sweet and disgusting. I can recall the first time I met Tim Vulgar. It was in the bathroom of a club in 1999 (I believe), and he tried to shake my hand at the urinals while we were both using them while at the same time hocking me his band the Clone Defects' first 7". Sweet and disgusting for sure. (EA)

In the Red Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.intheredrecords.com



Golightly, Holly – Slowly But Surely, CD

The sweet sounds of Ms. Golightly have been haunting my record player since her days in the Thee Headcoatees, and later in the mid-nineties as a solo artist. Depending on how you count her discography, this is something like her 12th solo record, along with countless 7-inches. Holly started off as more of a garage rocker with moments of Latin jazz and country thrown in for flavor. We now see her giving us her most twang filled record to date. Fans of Holly's earlier records may be put off by the

sheer number of slower tunes on this disc, but that shouldn't scare you away. You need to be in the mood for upright basses, lap guitars, and organs to appreciate *Slowly but Surely*. I loved the "I'm Gonna Stay Young Until I Die," flag once, too, but I have found myself maturing into the appreciation of beautiful music. This is not a garage record, and it's not a punk record, but be warned that this is some great music that your parents might even dig. Holly should be applauded for this record and the chance she took in making it stand out. It stands as a perfect soundtrack to blast across crappy car stereos, crackling along in the rain while looking for a lost love or maybe after losing one. Other recent releases sound much different

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

this classic release shouldn't ignore Allin's later work, which included some brilliantly catchy releases with other backing bands. Three personal favorites are EMF, Expose Yourself to Kids, and Murder Junkies. Also, the Jabbers (minus the tragically deceased GG) are again an active band these days. Wimpy from the Queers is on vocals, and their must-see live sets include both Queers and Jabbers songs.

It's getting colder, but these records are hot: Retards, *Not Fucked Enough*; Horrorpops, *Bring it On*; Boils, *From the Bleachers*; Beerzone, *Against the Flow*; ANTISEN / Hammerlock, *Split*.



Eric Grubbs (EG)

Kara's Flowers, *The Fourth World*. You know the four ex-members of Kara's Flowers as fourth-fifths of Maroon 5 these days, but before you groan about Maroon 5's white boy pop funk, give this record a chance. Released well after the post-Weezer major label signing binge, Reprise unleashed this well polished record that evokes the tuneful pop of Weezer and Superdrag. They say overproduction kills records but in this case, Rob Cavallo's production raises the quality of these already snappy songs. Organs and strings augment the bright guitars, drums, and vocals all for the better. The band did some touring and made an eye-catching video for their first (and only) single "Soap Disco," but then they disappeared. Though Kara's Flowers were set to record a follow-up to the *Fourth World*, they found themselves label-less and decided to finish college. Apparently they fell in love with funk, soul, and R&B while in college and thus became Maroon 5, a band that my friend Nick once perfectly described as "a boy band with instruments." Maroon 5's *Songs About Jane* is soulless funky pop right up the alley for those that think that music is a throwaway commodity. For me, the *Fourth World* is a great non-commodity in the world of alterna-pop rock. Hearing the same band that went from the *Fourth World* into *Songs About Jane* reminds me of a quote by Woody Allen's character in *Annie Hall*: "Everything our parents said was good is bad: sun, milk, red meat... college."

We got both kinds—we got both country and western: Petula Clark, *Ultimate Petula Clark*; Jimmy Eat World, *Clarity*; Surfan Stevens, *Illinois*; Wilco, *Being There*; Converge, *You Fall Me*.



Dave Hofer (DH)

De La Soul, *Stakes is High*. After the hippie-flavored success of their debut, *3 Feet High and Rising*, De La Soul went on to release a number of records to distance themselves from that image while at the same time proving they could still rhyme with the best of them. *Stakes is High*, released in 1996, is their fourth record, and what a doozy. Not nearly as dense as their earlier work (especially *De La Soul is Dead*), the production on *Stakes* is smooth and unobtrusive, taking from jazz and soul records and leaving plenty of space for the MC's to work with. Sitting down and listening to the lyrics on this record is enough to melt your brain, though, and nine years after its release is still dizzying in its ability to expose something new with every listen. Take "Betta Listen," for example. A conversation between a man and a woman evolves as such: "Her name was Gail from the Union of Dale / I made her remove the shades so her eyes could tell me the plan / 'Yo, where's your man?' / 'Oh, that nigga's past tense / Painted bruises on my face / haven't seen him ever since' / Gave a pinch to my bottom and started rubbing my back / she said, 'I bet your ass is darker than a Mobb Deep track!'" *Stakes is High* is filled to the brim with incredible lyricism and production, but remained highly overlooked in the mid '90's gangsta rap explosion.

She glanced deep in my eyes, said "Oh, shit, you're ill!" / I like the way your mind moves around at will: A Life Once Lost, *Hunter* (reviewed this issue); Boogie Down Productions, *By all Means Necessary*; DJ Quik, *Quik is the Name*; Human Remains, *Using Sickness as a Hero*; Vince "Cenzo" Hayner, *Even More Nasty Adventures of the Intergalactic Nasty McLast*; Who Spreads His Nastiness Over the Vast Expanse of the Now Nasty Universe, *Making it that Much More Nasty*, Vol. Two.



Kari Jensen (KJ)

The Divine Comedy, *Promenade*. The Divine Comedy's Neil Hannon is a rarity: a clever, bookish, self-aware songwriter who somehow manages to avoid being utterly pretentious. His masterpiece, the grand *Promenade*, is rife with carpe diem exuberance, but it still takes the time to pause and reflect. It is a rich orchestral work that is both innocent and naughty, both foolish and wise—and always thoroughly beautiful. Hannon, the essence of the Divine Comedy, built his 1994 album around the Horace quote (as translated by John Dryden), "Happy the man, and happy he alone, he, who can call today his own, he who, secure within, can say, 'Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today.'" The resulting *joie de vivre* is detailed throughout the album in Hannon's booming baritone, backed by gorgeous, swooping strings and swirling woodwinds. There are images of youth: "Going Downhill Fast" is a blissful lilt that follows a carefree boy bicycling as butterflies flutter about; "Summerhouse" is the story of two children whose friendship blossoms while they go on holiday with their families; and "Don't Look Down" tells of two lovers attempting to conquer their fear of heights while riding a ferris wheel. There is the slightly peculiar ode to French cinema, "When the Lights Go Out all Over Europe," in which Hannon asserts that "Doris Day could never make [him] cheer up quite the way those French girls always could." And then there are downright goofy celebrations of literature ("The Booklovers"), alcohol ("A Drinking Song"), and, of all things, fish ("A Seafood Song"). By the end of the album, though, the lightheartedness subsides as Hannon begins to contemplate what exactly it is—life—is all about. "Tonight We Fly," the album's brilliant closer, finds its narrator and a companion floating over their town, looking at the lives of others and pondering their own existence, ultimately deciding that they've had so much fun on earth, an afterlife is something they could take or leave. A lovelier album I could scarcely fathom. (KJ)

I'm listenin' ta: Andrew Bird, *Weather Systems*; Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, *Spanish Dance Troupe*; REM, *Automatic for the People*; the Divine Comedy, *Liberation*; Morrissey, *Maladjusted*.



Ari Joffe (AJ)

Venom, *Welcome to Hell*. This is Venom's debut album, released in 1981. The English trio was the black sheep of the new wave of British heavy metal scene happening in the UK during the late '70s / early '80s, led by Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. Where those acts dealt in precise, galloping riffs and wailing, falsetto vocals, Venom took a cue from their punk rock cousins and cultivated a brand of growling, frenzied, sloppy, ultra-distorted, ultra-fast, delinquent rock—something like a mongrel mix of Motör-

importantly, bands with depth. There is a quality to the music that is quite danceable, regardless if it's chaotic or at a poppier moment. The energy is huge and the sound is in your face without the more in-your-face guitars associated with punk these days. They've even included to their ranks a keys / moog player that continues to drive the music over the edge, as if the dual vocals weren't enough. This is something that I will be telling friends about, because there are qualities that someone who was a Blood Brothers fan or a Devo fan, as well as a Q and not U fan, would completely dig on. Let's hear it for Ho-Ag, as well as for Boston! (DM)

Hive 35, 530 Cambridge St #1 Allston, MA 02134 www.ho-ag.com

Holy Roman Empire – Lost in Landscapes, CD

Certainly not what one would expect from alumni made up of tough-guy outfits like the Killing Tree, the Suicide File, and the Hope Conspiracy, but then again, that seems to be the point. Chock full of technical yet melodic Quicksand riffs, Holy Roman Empire's ace in the hole, or Achilles' heel as it were, is vocalist Emily Schambra, a classically trained singer who is the sultry ying to the band's crunchy, post-hardcore yang. Unfortunately, it's this distinction that winds up becoming the band's biggest liability. Schambra's vocals do add certain panache to an otherwise unmemorable six songs, but this flare only works against her by creating unsightly comparisons to Evanescence. Kudos to the band for charging headfirst into unfamiliar territory even if the end result could hardly be considered a success. (MS)

He Who Corrupts Inc., 196 Fairfield Ave Elmhurst, IL 60126 www.hewhocorruptsinc.com

I am Electric – Thrush, CD

A lot of times when bands list Sonic Youth and Fugazi as their influences, they turn out to be crappy bands that make you instantly remark, "Man, this sounds like a shitty Fugazi." So I was a bit skeptical about this one at first. My skepticism, however, was soon shot down, because this record is extremely consistent, beginning to end. I can hear the Fugazi influence on the vocals, but I am Electric aren't one of those Fugazi knock-off bands. They have some DC post-punk going on, which definitely is not a bad thing, and as well as successful transitions between quiet and loud, with multiple vocals filling the space. Their overlapping vocals prove to be the most effective part about their sound, especially heard on the enthusiastic "Assembly Line People Program." I am Electric has a rich, full sound that could have spawned on the West Coast, stopped in the Midwest and grabbed some influence, and then taken a long stay in DC. Not merely labeled as a "post-punk" band, I am Electric have dancey hooks and screamo-style breakdowns. This band has not only gotten a good review, they've also gained another fan. (MB)

www.iamelectric.com

Icky Boyfriends – A Love Obscene, CD

From 1989 to '95, San Francisco's Icky Boyfriends were devoted to two things: a goofball sense of pop-culture humor and running the tape at all times. The result is this two-disc set, which packages two full length releases with a few singles, a "rock opera," and omnipresent cassette hiss. 57 tracks in all, it's a bit much. Falling somewhere between art school nihilism and straight up stupidity, the Icky Boyfriends' charm lies in their complete abandon. The drums on all tracks sound like a 4-year-old practicing "Wipe Out," while

single guitarist Shea Bond plucks from the finest chord progressions of early Sub Pop singles. The dude to listen for, though—and you, uh, can't miss him—is "froed" singer Jonathan Swift. Think a combination of "Weird" Al Yankovic and Robert Pollard. There are a few songs about burritos, a few about abortion, and one called "New Kids," a color commentary of an unrealized day in the life of the New Kids on the Block. Relive the secret life of idiots. (TS)

Menlo Park Recordings, 1652 Copper Station, New York, NY 10276; www.menloparkrecordings.com

Infarto, the – Scheisse! CD

Scheisse, as you may or may not know, is German for "shit." The Infarto's definition for the term, in naming the album *Scheisse!*, must have been more along the lines of "shit, man, this shit is the shit! Shit!" At least, that's pretty much what I thought when hearing this shit for the first time. The Infarto are, in fact, Italian (or at least sing in the language, which is perplexing considering the etymology of their album title, but whatever) and provide handy English translations in their liner notes so you can read along at home and hate yourself and the world just as much as these guys do. The shit played on the album is mid-tempo basement thrash that hits all the right notes. Just the right amount of metal coming out of the amplifiers, just the right poppy cadence to the drumming, and just the right amount of ire and misanthropy in the singer's full-throated shouts. Feel free to point your finger in the air and start a circle pit when this shit plays. This shit comes in a sweet cardboard sleeve with some artistic sketching of what looks like an offshore oil rig or some shit. Apparently it took five labels to release *Scheisse!*, and you can find their contact information below. Shit. (JJC)

Shove Records, www.shoverecords.com, Donna Bavosa Records, www.donnabavosarecords.com, Horror Vacui Theatre, www.horrorvacuithattheatre.tk, Concubine Records, www.concubinerrecords.com, Tornado Recordings, amutante@virgilio.it

Jet by Day – The Vulture, CD

For some reason, I keep hearing the ghost of Samiam's Jason Beebout in Jet by Day's David Matysiak's voice on *Vulture*. I say this only as a reference point because guitarist/vocalist Matysiak has a good voice and the band he fronts is really good. Jet by Day sounds atmospheric on *Vulture*, but they aren't drowning in reverb. The songs go places with various changes while being straightforward at first listen. Touches of piano and electronic programming do well for the softer interludes as they don't come off as cheeseball gimmicks. Jet by Day sound like a relatively darker straight ahead rock band with some traces of poppy post-hardcore/emo than anything else. Yes, there are some bendy guitar leads, but there are plenty of good tunes overshadowing them. This kind of band is a welcome change from the soulless, fleeting junk that is peddled to the kids these days. (EG)

Future Farmer Recordings, PO Box 225128, San Francisco, CA 94122, www.futurefarmer.com

Johnie 3 – S/T, CD

Does Alyssa Milano remain culturally relevant? She must; Johnie 3 wrote a pop punk song about her. Wait, are pop punk bands culturally relevant? Johnie 3 proves that even if a band tries nothing new in a silly, stale genre, it can still release fleetingly entertaining records for a

silly, stale audience. After all, boys will be boys. Always, they will lust after girls. They will fantasize about 69-ing in the back seat—an idea proposed in the Johnie 3 song “Mmm Bop Bop.” They will like straightforward songs, such as Johnie 3’s “O-A-O,” which goes, “Do you like me? / Oh-way-oh. / ‘Cause I like you. / Oh-way-oh,” before it references the Ramones, Space Invaders, and “1999” by Prince. Kids will always go through the pop-punk phase. And as long as boys’ voices crack when they ask their algebra teachers a question, pop-punk bands will write snappy, melodic, three-chord songs about girls, private parts, booze, and pop culture. They will misspell song titles, as Johnie 3 did with its ode to self-love, “I Wanna Masterbate” [sic]. They will write songs that are as sincere as they are silly. In “Girls Girls Girls,” lead vocalist Jay gushes, “I just wanna do it with you.” And pop-punk bands will make undeniably catchy music. Until humans evolve enough for puberty to be a pointless part of life, pop-punk bands will be pop-punk bands. For better or worse, Johnie 3 is one. (JM)
 Cheap skate Records, 297 Stoodley Place, Schenectady, NY 12303, www.cheap skate records.com

Kids Like Us – Outta Control CD

This album delivers decent enough throwback hardcore that sounds like Kids Like Us (KLU) listened to the first two Suicidal Tendencies a whole bunch—unfortunately, the influence of the inferior *Join the Army* wins over the untouchable first LP. Still, this isn’t bad. These guys seem pretty serious about straightedge, as “Monster Squad” proclaims, “Edge ‘til dead!” and “Asshat” says, “You think because you’re straightedge / you’re my fucking brother?” The promo sheet claims of a southern rock influence are either inaudible or imaginary. This isn’t my usual cup of core, but kudos to KLU for not falling into the metalcore trap and for the cool cartoon artwork. (AB)
 Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Killer’s Kiss – S/T, CD

This is nasty stuff. On their self-titled debut full length, Killer’s Kiss do the lurching blues-based garage-rock thing. It’s played loose and sloppy, but the primal rhythm section holds it all together. The guitars are cranked and noisy as hell, with reverb drenched solos all over the place, while cool organ work sometimes evokes a dumbed-down Lyres. Singer Chris Owen howls like a drunken John Brannon (Negative Approach, Laughing Hyenas), the kind of guy that considers “last call” to be fightin’ words. The band starts out cookin’ through the first few tracks, then they bring it to a Stooges-style simmer over the second half, only to turn up the heat and boil over in the closing track, “Hate.” As good as the record is, I get the feeling it doesn’t even compare to the live show. (JC)

Hook or Crook Records, 4219 Tanglewood Trail, Spring Branch, TX 78070 www.hookorcrook.com

Kingsley – S/T, CD

Fronted by Harris Thurmond (Hammerbox, Orbiter, Sanford Arms, and all-around Seattle staple), this quartet plays power pop—scratch that—rock anthems with just a touch of sassy swagger. This album recalls ‘90s “alternative” radio in the best way: punk-kissed, hook-laden, and downright sugary melodies played with unnecessarily sweaty post-grunge fervor (to excellent effect). We’re talking pretty songs wrapped in

big, crunching guitars and sung with low, leisurely vocals. My impression is that these guys are no strangers to the sound studio; this album is precisely executed and probably plays exactly as the band intended it to sound. Perhaps Kingsley’s only real liability is their musical kinship with a style that overstayed its day in the sun. And sure, maybe this sound is downright played out in the Seattle of 2005, but that doesn’t change the fact that Kingsley’s album ranges from merely pretty good all the way up to actually quite excellent, and gives the impression of a band capable of putting on a great live show. For my money, the album highlight is “Bad Sake,” which presciently identified discreet hand claps in choruses as the key to this reviewer’s heart. And plus: dude, *Hammerbox!* (CB)

Blood Orange, 117 Louisa #216, Seattle, WA 98107, www.kingsleymusic.com

La Mi Vida Violenta / Sentai – Split, CD

La Mi Vida Violenta (LMV) purportedly plays “punk-af-robeat-funk-avant-garde-jazz-girl-boy-revolution-music,” with multiple drum kits and a bevy of even more random sounds. But don’t be fooled: what LMV puts forth during the two tracks of theirs on this split EP is nothing nearly that intricate. Once you weave past the pretension, the band punches out some melodic emogarde that switches up instruments as often as vocal stylings, with the first just as tweaked out as the next. The concept is interesting: with seven members in one band, it’s no wonder their sound is so scattered. Sentai is given the last three tracks, and has more cohesive success in their overall sound and approach. Though their locale is Virginia, songs like “Black Jellybeans” lend Sentai a DC-inspired sound, combining the anthem shouting vocals of Q & not U accompanied by quick, straight drums. They lose points for the Casio/Speak-n-Say medley on the following tracks, but once those vocals kick in again, brash and forthright, I forgive them. (SBM)

Ruffian Records, www.ruffianrecords.com

Leng Tch’e – The Process of Elimination, CD

I’m pretty much convinced that anything that comes out on Relapse Records these days is gonna be killer. God bless Relapse... they fuckin’ rule. They’re like the new Earache. They’ve released stuff by High on Fire, Unsane, Today is the Day, Nile, Pig Destroyer, Zeke, Soilent Green, and now Leng Tch’e—an insanely awesome band that’s the perfect synthesis of Deicide’s grinding death metal and DRI’s thrashing slam dance anthems. They even throw in a little bit of Motörhead-inspired biker metal for good measure. They’re balls to the wall heavy but utterly listenable too, never getting too complicated for their own good and never gumming up the works by playing excessively fast or cramming too many riffs into a tune. This gives the listener time to let each riff sink into your head before the next section of the song is presented. The lyrical content deals with social and political issues. Protests against meathead machismo posturing (“Testosterone Collar”) and the glamorization of socially parasitic behavior in pop culture (“PIMP”) are growled out in a manner, at times, reminiscent of the harsh possessed style of Deicide’s Glen Benton. The tunes are short and sweet (like most grindcore) with only a smattering of guitar solos here and there. I can’t recommend this disc highly enough. Just awesome. And if you dig these guys, do yourself a favor and check out Siege of Hate, Misery Index and Nasum. (AJ)

Relapse, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

from this platter. My *First Holly Golightly Record* should be hitting stateside as you read this, containing a great selection of her best songs from past records and newly recorded versions of live favorites. Also, relatively recent is Down Gina’s *At 3* a live compact disc that captures Holly at her drunken best. Holly could surprise everyone and put out a real rocker out next... either way, I will be waiting in line. Not one to sit back and regurgitate the same sound over and over, Holly Golightly has rewarded us again. (EA)

Damaged Goods Records, PO Box 45854, London, E11 1YX, www.damagedgoods.com

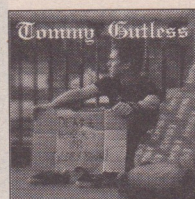


Maximo Park – A Certain Trigger, CD

“I sleep with my hands across my chest / and I dream of you with someone else,” Paul Smith sings to open and close “Going Missing.” Those two lines and countless others on *A Certain Trigger* identify the period of uncertainty, the emotional limbo, that plagues people in early adulthood. Because all 13 tracks somehow examine that social and personal no man’s land, the record creates a complete sense of that limbo, which makes *A Certain Trigger* one of the finest records of 2005. In “Going

Missing,” frontman Smith describes a character, likely himself, whose body language acts as a defense mechanism meant to shield himself from painful breakdowns in relationships. The character’s own subconscious projects the moment of infidelity, however. Internal as well as external forces gang up on him. If the sentence from “Going Missing” is a gem, then the entire album is an untouched diamond mine. “I am young / and I am lost,” Smith sings in “The Coast is Always Changing.” Few qualities fuel rock songs as well as youth and alienation, especially when delivered via terse, percussive lyrics. In “Apply Some Pressure,” Smith plays with repetition to lighten the mood of uncertainty clouding his speaker’s desire for a potential partner: “You know that I would love to see you next year / I hope that I am still alive next year / you know that I would love to see you in that dress / I hope that I will live to see you undress.” But the speaker’s only action is that hope. He chooses to remain passive, wait, and learn how his object of affection decides to assert herself. The speaker expects that he will make no progress. “What happens when you lose everything? / you just start again,” Smith sings. That inconclusive resolution is a self-fulfilling prophecy in a way. In “Signal and Sign,” Smith uses the image of waiting in a line leading to a closed ticket window to show his character spending life bouncing between points A and B. “Well, I’ve been waiting / here for hours / It’s getting cold / Position closed,” Smith sings. The character could be a nephew of John Lennon’s “Nowhere Man.” Words in “Acrobat” describe the struggle to choose a comfortable sleeping position when in bed with a mate. The speaker temporarily has what he wants, but unblemished satisfaction eludes him. “Acrobat” is the dislocated thumb of the record. Fuzzy guitar wafts above sustained keyboards and a drum program. Smith recites the verses in his speaking voice until he belts the chorus. Musically, it’s the moodiest song on *A Certain Trigger*, whose main ingredients are burpy keyboard, jangly and jumpy guitar, twitchy stop and go rhythm and subtle melody. Altogether, Maximo Park’s thematic limbo and lively indie rock compare favorably with the music of bands such as Franz Ferdinand and the Strokes. If those acts’ mainstream popularity has not made Maximo Park vulnerable to a backlash, then the band could have a hit record in its crosshairs. (JM)

Warp Records, www.warprecords.com



Tommy Gutless – Death, Honor, or Glory Bound, CD

It’s appropriate that *Death, Honor, or Glory Bound* landed in my review box, as it was already my top obsession at the time I received it. The Pittsburgh area spawned a slew of amazing bands in the ‘90s, from every subgenre of punk imaginable. The Sussed was the region’s first known oi band, and in their wake a tradition of oi influenced street-punk developed. Tommy Gutless is the latest band of the type, and I first caught onto them when I saw them a few times live, blowing

away the better known nationally recognized bands they opened for. They finally recorded and released this full length, and it’s one of the catchier, more studied oi influenced albums in ages. Musically, their main influences are US and European oi, both of the old and new school variety. They’ve done their homework, and while they’re not a right wing band, the riffs on some of these tracks show that they’re familiar with oi stalwarts on all ends of the political spectrum. The lyrics are included as explanations of the lyrics, which is not a common attribute of oi lyric sheets. The band seems to be genuinely thoughtful about working class issues, and has an elevated understanding of punk subcultures, as well as of the stereotypes that go along with the subcultures. The best songs are “Rise Again,” about the contradictions of being a vet, “Working Class Dream,” about simultaneously staying punk while meeting other life goals, and “54 40 or Fight,” yet another take on the concept of manifest destiny. The vocals couldn’t be sharper, and the backing vocals are high in the mix yet tasteful. As with the music scenes in other cities, Pittsburgh’s scene is fragmented to the point that many people who ought to be supporting Tommy Gutless haven’t even heard them yet. Hopefully this perfect album will give them the local, national, and international following they deserve. (AE)

Street Anthem Records, PMB #218, 1530 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19102

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

head and the Dead Boys. The band wrote killer songs but seemed to have trouble actually playing their designated parts in time and consistently correct for the duration of their two to three minutes. The guitar solos consist of hastily executed Ted Nugent licks and vicious whammy bar abuse, and most tracks end with the whole band flailing away in a cacophony of vicious noise. This wild bare bones sound resonated heavily with a huge number of young musicians the world over and in the process spawned genres like thrash, death, and black metal. Venom's over the top, B-horror movie style, "satanic" image (and lyrics) totally bewitched the Norwegian metal community in particular. Nordic fans took songs like "In League With Satan" so literally that a contingent of that scene began burning churches to prove their dedication to the dark side. Both *Welcome to Hell* and its follow up, *Black Metal*, were reissued by Sanctuary Records in 2002 with bonus cuts and demos, so that's the version to get if you really wanna' join Venom's legions. Hail Satan!

Five Killers: YOB, *The Unreal Never Lived*; Obituary, *Frozen in Time*; Eyehategod, *Confederacy of Ruined Lives*; Kylesa, *To Walk a Middle Course*; Leng Tch'e, *The Process of Elimination* (reviewed this issue).



Scott Jones (SJ)

The Smiths, *The Queen is Dead*. *The Queen is Dead* is one of those albums I used to listen to so much that I know every single lyric. Yes, I used to be a Smiths-a-holic. Why, you ask? Well because the Smiths make being depressed feel so good. Add in the brilliant, chiming guitar of Johnny Marr, Morrissey's pathos filled voice, and rock/pop's most underrated rhythm section of Andy Rourke on the bass guitar and Mike Joyce on the drums, and you've got an irresistible combination. "I Know it's Over" is one of the most depressing dirges ever written with lines like, "Mother I can feel the soil falling over my head" and "The sea wants to take me / the knife wants to slit me." It's not all doom and gloom, though. "Frankly, Mr. Shankly" is a poppy upbeat number with a skank rhythm. When Morrissey sings "Frankly, Mr. Shankly, since you ask / you are a flatulent pain in the arse," he proves that he does have a sense of humor after all. The Smiths had one of their biggest hits with "There is a Light That Never Goes Out," a song about not wanting to be lonely, which is something everyone's been through at one time or another: "Take me out tonight / take me anywhere / I don't care / driving in your car / I never never want to go home / because I haven't got one." I don't listen to the Smiths like I used to but I will always have a place in my heart for these songs.

Current preoccupations: Sigur Ros, Takk; the Mountain Goats, *Sunset Tree*; Dizzee Rascal, *Boy in da Corner*; Medicine, *Mechanical Forces of Love*; Can, *Ege Bamyasi*.



Ryan Leach (RL)

Larry Williams and Johnny Guitar Watson, *Two for the Price of One*. *Two for the Price of One* is the definitive blaxploitation record. There's nothing in its league, with the exception of Norton's collection of Hannibal's singles. This album was a product of the late '60s and the ever-changing political and pop culture climate. Larry Williams had been around for awhile as a songwriter ("Bony Maronie") and singer. Johnny "Guitar" Watson was a gun slinger who 86'd his old blues persona for a Dolemite one. First and foremost, these guys could play really well. Watson was a shit hot guitarist and Williams was a formidable lyricist. This record takes cues from Hubert Selby Junior's ghetto setting in *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. The record occasionally borders on camp but never crosses it. Williams and Watson take bravado to a new level, singing about all the things that make a 1967 hustler's world go round: Cadillac El Dorados, tight britches, and women. This one is hard to find on compact disc, even tougher on vinyl. If a talented Rudy Ray Moore fronting the MG's sounds good to you, pick this album up whatever the price!

Drinking Natural Light . . . times be hard: The Guilty Hearts, *S/T*; the Gun Club, *Miami*; the Starvations, *Gravity's a Bitch*; James Brown, *Live at the Apollo*; Dream Syndicate, *Days of Wine and Roses*.



Justin Marciniaik (JM)

Randy Newman, *Good Old Boys*. The first time I heard a song from *Good Old Boys*, I almost cried. As of 10 days after Hurricane Katrina caused the levee breaches that flooded New Orleans, I had heard only a handful of Randy Newman songs. Then, I caught an interview with Newman on National Public Radio about his song "Louisiana 1927." The lyrics eerily describe a flood. The second verse uses tidy parallelism: "The river rose all day / the river rose all night / some people got lost in the flood / some people got away all right." The chorus goes, "Louisiana / Louisiana / they're trying to wash us away." After days of reading and listening to news and becoming furious with government deadbeats, those lines nearly breached my levees. And hearing the full LP for the first time was like seeing a Best Picture winner after watching the movie's moderately interesting trailer. *Good Old Boys* examines the personal and political abuses of the South, and besides tears, Newman draws laughter and outrage. His southern characters are proud, prejudiced, and pathetic. The racial divide and poverty line hinder them, too. When Katrina flooded New Orleans, the storm stranded thousands who swim against the currents of race and class. Sadly, Newman's criticism and satire in "Mr. President (Have Pity on the Working Man)" and "Rednecks" remain relevant. If the album is timely now, 31 years after its release, let's hope its message seems dated in 31 more years.

Wrote my reviews, so now I can play: Maximo Park, *A Certain Trigger* (reviewed this issue); Kanye West, *Late Registration*; Rilo Kiley, *The Execution of All Things*; Bright Eyes, *Lifted or the Story is in the Soil, Keep Your Ear to the Ground*; the Verve, *Urban Hymns*.



Sean Moeller (SM)

Anne Summers, *Very Classy*. Come and gone so quickly, Anne Summers is still a band that haunts me. I take them back every now and again, into my arms, just to see if they still smell good and fit the same way they used to. Many bands that I found to suit me seven years ago, when I was just beginning to throw all the money I possessed at record store clerks, remain about as fresh as a bag of microwave popcorn or a Bruegger's bagel left out overnight. I don't listen to Fretblanket anymore, for one. The Parasites were a fleeting frenzy, and fuck if I'm ever going to play that Marcy Playground debut again. But this DC trio of slick dressers and cocksuck smartasses are a holdover that could get a postmortem second wind when

Lords - Swords, CD

Straight outta Louisville, Kentucky, Lords play fast, to-the-point, hyperactive punk/metal. There's big on riffs that start, stop, roll around, and then find their groove and dance for a few seconds before pausing and moving on to the next song. Think Fantomas covering Black Flag's later material, and you're there. *Swords* is a glorious 20 minute, 13 song blur of fury, highlighted by vocalist/guitarist Chris Owens' irate rantings. He belts his words out like a speed-freak preacher on Easter—one of his more decipherable couplets being, "You will all die as you lived / slow and stupid!" Antisocial for sure, and man does it work. This is what punk rock is supposed to be. It's mean and nasty and there sure as hell aren't any choruses to speak of. It's outsider music, simple and plain, meant to empower those who can empathize and distance those who can't. Blink and it's over, damage done like a hit and run. (A)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kemmyn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

Lost Patrol Band, the - S/T, CD

This "solo-project" of Dennis Lyxzen of the (International) Noise Conspiracy and Refused is a real piece of shit. What this guy hopes to accomplish, I don't know. Does he think he's Bowie? Hardcore was happening in the '90s, so Dennis had Refused. In 2000, folks started to catch on to Jeffrey Lee Pierce and Billy Childish, so Dennis had the exciting, albeit politically naïve, the (International) Noise Conspiracy. Now that the Exploding Hearts made Nick Lowe cool, Dennis comes forth with this album. Not feeling it. This record's as legit as Moe Tucker drumming on the upcoming Raveonettes album. See, the Raveonettes dupe benighted kids who, obviously, have no idea who the Jesus and Mary Chain are, into buying their records. Dennis does the same with whatever style of music is in vogue. I'll give credit where credit's due: the guy's proficient at making stylistic jumps. Unfortunately for Dennis, I buy these jumps like the magic-bullet theory. Hey, Dennis, maybe next time you can dig up Keith Levene for more street cred and a name check on your press release. This should be a hit with 17 year-old suburban high school kids. (RL)

Burning Heart Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles CA, 90026

Lozenge - Undone, CD

I think these guys followed that jazz band on Tatooine, generating an even heavier sound for some late night ragamuffins. Actually from Chicago, Lozenge play some hard, free flowing pieces based in improvisation. They describe these tracks as simply blueprints for songs as they would be performed live, favoring the discoveries and failures of their tangents. The bass is heavy and gritty and they have some fine metal percussion from a drummer that can click-clack its way about in harsh Bone Machine patterns a la Tom Waits. However, the accordion, oboe, and tuba (among other less used instruments), are unique incorporations. They won't meet all tastes, but give the album a touch of goofy playfulness. Despite its spasmodic basis, the album, at nearly an hour, can at times sound strangely similar. But, they break this up with sound samples, circus-like snippets, and pieces with vocals that add some good direction, but not enough. (BA)

Sickroom Records, Ltd., PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

Lurkers, the - 26 Years, CD

The Lurkers must have better lawyers to handle their

copyright infringements than Sufjan Stevens did. While the Illinois architect dealt with migraines thanks to his placement of Superman on the cover of his new record, West London's legendary Lurkers unabashedly slapped Dirty Harry right on the front of this 15-track retrospective. Good for them. This band use the three chords that make the most sense (or are the first that come to mind) and whip right back out to 1978, clean and clear. It's not punk-by-numbers because, when it was originally made, there were only four numbers—1, 2, 3, 4—barked quick and sharp, and then liftoff. This is some of that real stuff that can't be made anymore. (SM)

www.sosrecords.us

Lupus - (Band Not as Shown), CD

If the Transplants weren't serious about what they did, they'd be Lupus. Surprising, cruel, and undeniably hilarious, *(Band Not as Shown)* is a howl of a joke record. Lupus hails from Vancouver. Musically, they mix ska and some hip-hop influences into fast punk. Lyrically, they mix the scatological with the juvenile as they tackle issues ranging from the war on drugs, to US/Canada relations, to Kelly Osbourne. I laughed out loud numerous times upon first hearing it, which is either a sign of a character flaw on my part or a sign of a hilarious band. Their song topic choices are interesting and unique in that they make jokes about raping fifteen year-olds and spreading STDs in the same breath as demonstrating a serious, almost PC side in their anti-US songs. They're no Dead Milkmen, but this is funnier and more rocking than any recent joke record I can recall. (AE)

Crusty Records, PO Box 59, 1895 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, CANADA, crusty_records@hotmail.com

Mae Shi, the - Go Zbra, CD

I adore roller coasters. When taming a good one, albeit they are few and far between, senseless beatings ensue, death is beckoned, bearings are tossed into the dark corners of the lower intestine, but possessive laughter, ear to ear grins, and enthusiastic sprints back towards the same long line ultimately prevail. I adore the Mae Shi. In fact, this is the best set of new jams to have graced the presence of my flexed speakers in a long while. Honestly, I'm not sure what the fuck is going here: double loopy loops, corkscrews, fifty foot plummets? Every time the track smooths out for some pretty sightseeing, it ruptures back into hellfire and brimstone before any breath can be caught. Ten songs in 15 minutes. Bratty-eye-swelling-extraterrestrial-technological-advancements-in-pop-bludgeoning. After this you too will be exhausted, stumbling in a stupor for the nearest slushee or pretzel cart. (BM)

Deleted Art, Palmestergatan 24, 414 67, Gothenburg, Sweden, www.deletedart.org

Marah-Mar - S/T, CDEP

Dependent on bass-y hums and slow grooves mixed with sporadic, barely-played cello, *Marah-Mar* starts off with a pace sure to be bogged down by its slow climb, if a climb at all. At times this proves to be true, but at others Marah-Mar turns the sparse into the orchestral, creating guttural instrumentals that build and fall to pieces. The first two tracks achieve this effect better than the following songs. Where strings overlap with deep synths and the pace quickens, the music is much more engaging. It feels on the move, trying to get somewhere. However, the end of the EP falls victim to closed off instrumentals, which are hymn-like, fail-

ing to reach places more dynamic and interesting than where they currently reside. All together, the moments of swelling—trancelike and memorable—are undercut by receding, timid orchestration. (AJA)
 Scenester Credentials, PO Box 1275, Iowa City, IA 52244, www.scenecred.com

Margot & the Nuclear So & So's — The Dust of Retreat, CD

For the coffee-or-something-smartly-latte-in-hand crowd, Margot & the Nuclear So & So's debut full length is just the kind of record to invite over for a long, warm conversation on the porch, with a loitering breeze and the sharp whiff of cut grass in the air. Designed by the Indiana band to fit its unreal ideas of Greenwich Village circa the 1960s, "The Dust of Retreat" is a bounty of glorious love markings that take your breath away a little more each time they present themselves. It's the kind of idiosyncratic album that belongs with the most impressive things the Decembrists have done over the past three years, but also escapes from anything that could be easily labeled as seafarer/bookworm chic. Assessable in wider ways, but still remaining indie credible, this group should face no ceiling in one day becoming bigger than its wildest dreams. (SM)
www.margotandthesoandsos.com

McIntyre, Adam — Nothing Means Anything, CD

There are dozens of pop children—just like Adam McIntyre—in every city on the planet, who cherish all the time they can spend holed up with their Elvis Costello, Raspberries, Beatles and Duran Duran records, with nothing but open afternoons and a fridge full of Coke needing to be downed. The Montgomery, Alabama, songwriter is lovesick in just the right amounts and a careful practitioner of all the right melodic lessons that sometimes get noticed—Fountains of Wayne is what we're looking for here—and sometimes don't. Answer, the Owsley / Devin Davis Daily Double. And just because he might fall into that latter category, doesn't necessarily mean he's doing anything wrong. It's timeless soft in that way that gets ignored too often. (SM)
www.headphonetreats.com, info@headphonetreats.com

Mercurine — Waiting for Another Fall, CD

Keyboards, synths, homemade beats, and more synths. Mera Roberts, the lead lady in this two piece, unfortunately prefers to heavily whisper her lyrics as opposed to sing them, in an attempt to give the music a darker, more ethereal sound. Truth be told, it sounds like it was made in the mid '90s—when electronic rock was in it heyday—with a simultaneous preoccupation with the '80s, what with all of the synths running around on here. With all this borrowing going on, it becomes difficult to tell whether or not there is actually anything new being done on here. For the most part, the tempo can speed up or down to suit the song, but the tone and general mood always stay the same. About halfway through the album on "Nu Groove," Mercurine first begins to show some promise, as the tempo speeds up and Roberts displays her range over a textured field of sound. Another track near the end, "StrangeTimes-Love," offers up an impressive seven minute electro-pop lullaby that allows Roberts to move around within her vocal range—but overall, two tracks out of nine isn't enough to save it. (SBM)
 Self-released, www.mercurine.com

Mico de Noche — Balls Deep, CD

Courvoisier Jones and Hennessy Jameson, the aptly moniker-ed principals of Mico de Noche, have been playing together for something like twenty years in different bands around the Seattle area, and though they've appeared on stage with such grunge luminaries as Nirvana, Soundgarden, and the Melvins, these two have never felt the touch of nationwide renown. I don't think that'll change with their newest release, *Balls Deep*, but stranger things have happened. The sound of the album is somehow less mature than that of their former contemporaries, and is definitely trapped in that bygone era of plaid flannels and stone-washed denim. However, maturity is not lent easily to this kind of glorious sludge rock. Mico de Noche attack the listener with free guitar jamming—lots of metal flourishes and country fried solos are to be found here—and thunderous drums that just won't quit. The vocals are totally filthy, divided between indiscernible, twangy come-ons and shouted warnings of an impending cannibal apocalypse. I love this stuff, and if you have any kind of a soul, you will too. (JC)
 Violent Hippy Records, 1010 Nipsic Ave., Bremerton, WA 98310, www.violenthippy.com
 Buttermilk Records, 1108 13th Ave., Seattle, WA 98112, www.buttermilkrecords.com

Midnight Evils, the — Breakin' It Down, CD

I have it on good authority that the Midnight Evils don't often leave the confines of smoky, sweaty bars. It's probably only fitting that their music follows suit. *Breakin' It Down* is messy, intoxicated and—like most watering holes—stuck somewhere between 1964 and '75. There are not many revolutionary moments in the Evils' ways that don't involve the opposite sex and an unremembered ride home. Still, like the crustiest tavern, the Midnight Evils are strictly about the good times. Not a moment of their proto-Estrus-garage shtick falls far from the formula. "C'mon" is all about partying. "Party, Party, Party" is all about, um, yeah. The changes are straight Sonics, though the most "Hey, wait!" moments sound most like AC/DC. Bon Scott's channeled on more than one occasion, while "Move With You All Night Long" plays like an ode to Back in Black, right down to its urge to "have a drink on me." (TS)
 Estrus Records, PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227, www.estrus.com

Morricone, Ennio — Crime and Dissonance, CD

Crime and Dissonance, a handpicked collection of works by legendary Italian composer Ennio Morricone, does its best to showcase the septuagenarian as an influential authority on abstract and experimental music. Though he is best known for his spaghetti western soundtracks of the 1960s, Morricone's library of work is both diversified and voluminous. The vast majority of selected material (from none other than Ipecac label head Mike Patton) was originally recorded in the late '60s and early '70s. Clocking in at roughly 101 minutes, this double album of mixed time signatures and general weirdness is all over the place. My personal favorite (disc one, track six) hops from a beautiful string and vibraphone arrangement to an odd French vocal cadence to a '60s American pop ditty to a military march to a sweeping orchestral string piece, back to the march, back to the orchestral piece, back to the march, back to the orchestral piece, and finally back to the French vocal cadence. Most of *Crime and Dissonance* is very differ-

ent, however, and not necessarily able to be listened to as stand alone tracks. It should go without saying that this isn't for any winners of the Hardcore Dude(tte) of the Year Award, but this collection is probably among the least accessible of Morricone's music. It also goes without saying that Morricone is immensely talented. If you're a fan of free ranging, experimental soundtrack music, pick this up. (SJM)

Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563, www.ipecac.com

Municipal Waste — Hazardous Mutation CD

First off, Municipal Waste score two song titles of the year back to back: "Guilty of Being Tight" followed by "The Thrashin' of the Christ." The big hype on *Hazardous Mutation* is the addition of Dave Witte (Discordance Axis, Burnt by the Sun, a zillion other bands) on drums, but don't expect a blast fest here. The Waste traffic exclusively in retro '80s crossover and thrash metal. True to the aforementioned title, the band is impossibly tight; Witte's crisp drumming sets the pace, but nobody in the band is any sort of slouch. Municipal Waste may be playing a retro genre, but when they nail everything that was fun about the old bands it's hard to argue. One minor complaint for the sake of historical accuracy: back in the day, albums like this would have something like 30 songs on them. That's how you knew which ones were the good ones! (AB)
 Earache, 43 W. 38th St., 2nd floor, New York NY 10018, www.earache.com

Mutamassik — Masri Moksassar: Definitive Works, CD

This CD collects the highlights of almost a decade of high-octane work by Egyptian-born, New York-based DJ Mutamassik. Like a lot of instrumental hip-hop, Mutamassik lives and dies by her samples. Specifically, "Afro-asiatic roots" make up the most critical portion of Mutamassik's sonic arsenal. Middle eastern horns, strings, and hand drums appear throughout the disc. The sound reminds me of Muslingauze, but Mutamassik's goals seem much closer to that of someone like DJ Olive. On the one hand, the sampled middle eastern sounds will strike many listeners as refreshingly unfamiliar in hip-hop contexts. On the other hand, at times it comes off as little more than orientalism with solid drum programming, although to Mutamassik's credit, the samples aren't ever used in a way that suggests irony or camp. Anyway, once you've gotten over the exotic samples, Mutamassik's tastefully restrained turntablism and considerable talent for densely layering disparate percussion tracks stands out as more impressive. 4" Pyramid guests on "High Alert A'ala Geddu," Cyra Unique on "We-Do." (CB)
 Sound-Ink, www.sound-ink.com

MPX — Panic, CD

MPX is of those bands that used to play too fast and hard for just being a pop band. But then, they got their first hit with "Chick Magnet" from 2000's *Life in General* and realized their pop ability to their fullest potential. In 2002, *The Ever Passing Moment* was their reinvention of themselves as pop masters, with an homage to Elvis Costello in spirit. In 2005, MPX have finally achieved radio friendliness but didn't lose their harder edge. Great hooks, great songwriting (in both the mellower tunes as well as the rockers), and a sound so infectious that if it were a plague, listeners would be excited to show the symptoms. Not my thing overall, but it could be the record that breaks them. (DM)
 SideOneDummy, www.sideonedummy.com

Neins Circa, the — Sunday Anthems, CD

The Neins Circa's heady indie pop is in the vein of the New Pornographers and the Decembrists. Their music is more offbeat and less densely poppy than the former and not as brazenly academic as the latter. Likewise, they bring in elements of oldies pop, as in the Frankie Valley-esque chorus of "Flo," and tinge a good amount of their songwriting with a folksy twang, which is becoming ever so popular with aging hipsters these days. As well, their lyrics embrace both the colloquialism of drinking a beer in a dingy bar and the silliness of life in general. With an eye for the minutiae, they somehow make it seem significant. The songs on *Sunday Anthems* are longer than to be expected, pushing well past the six minute mark on a few tracks; however, the Neins Circa do a good job of maintaining momentum, changing pace and style enough times to prevent boredom but not overload their audience with a lot of look-at-me bells and whistles. Inventive, with few pretensions, and ephemeral, catchy melodies make *Sunday Anthems* one of the best listens this time around. (AJA)
 Scratch Recordings, 726 Richards St., Vancouver, BC V6B 3A4 Canada

Nervous Patterns — You Can't Change, 7"

The majority of decent college radio stations have back rooms full of well meaning yet oddly executed seven-inches from the heyday of what your parents called "new wave." Most smell like Whole Foods' cheese section and boast abstract cover art that look strikingly similar. Most of these singles also sound like this one from Nervous Patterns. "Beautiful Brutal" is the most 1982 side here, with some guy's nervy, staccato word-spewing doing its best to mask a few awkward time signatures and some kind of a British bounce. It's passable, though it likely wouldn't do more in a DJ set than to give some Devo fans a few bad ideas. "You Can't Change," on the other hand, is the perfect "the hell with it—I'm dumping him" pop song. With a great chorus and even better closing, it had me digging through my Primitives records to find which track it was ripping off. I never found it. I couldn't care less. (TS)
 Zaxxon Virile Action, CP 1218, Sorel-Tracy, Quebec, Canada J5P 7L5; www.zaxxonvirileaction.com

Novillero — Aim Right for the Holes in Their Lives, CD

Novillero starts out their record not with a bang, but instead with a song about how the laissez-faire system is "not quite working out," and further, that their asses are "quite used to sitting on fences," all amid a power pop attack of oo-ee-ooh's and handclaps. This is straight-up pop music for the masses, with so-so lyrics and a vocalist that sounds nasally strained and oddly rushed during every insipid repeat chorus. Every move is predictable, from the piano ballad buildup to the counter-melodies every 30 seconds—which might be OK if the lyrics were worth their snuff. There are some remote successes here, in the relaxed quality of the title track, and the imagery of "Insomnia," but otherwise, it falls flat. I would advise you to find your bop-bop-ba and oo-ee-ooh fix elsewhere. (SBM)
 Mint, PO Box 3613, Vancouver BC, Canada V6B 5Y6, www.mintrecs.com

One of the Loudest Tragedies Ever Heard — Situation Nowhere, CD

Listening to this band conjures in me the awful feeling that I should be doing something else. Led by a guy

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the *We Are Scientists* album is released in January, as similarities summon them together as brothers, cut from the same cloth and the same loam. Their dearest love belongs with the drink, and damn if that isn't why I can tolerate a Gretchen Wilson song or two. And if you can't appreciate a reference lyric such as "It's sort of a talent much like Michael Westbrook / not like Chasey Lain," as Anne Summers uses to quantify good and bad in "King of Disaster," you're suspect.

Current occupations: Jenny Lewis, *Rabbit Fur Coat*; We Are Scientists, *With Love and Squalor*; Against Me!, *Searching for a Former Clarity*; Jens Lekman, *Oh You're So Silent Jens*; Wolf Parade, *Apologies to the Queen Mary*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Sarah Moody

Mogwai, EP + 2. While this release is often overshadowed by *Young Team* and *Come on Die Young*, EP + 2 displays these Scottish post-rockers at their most poignant, and, arguably, their most relevant. This is an album about sonics and time, slow fades and moments, and how they mingle. "Stanley Kubrick" starts off the album with a simple snare, followed by a deep, lulling guitar line, and shortly thereafter the soft drone of feedback arrives amid the layers. Soon enough, all of these elements are playing off one another, rolling around in the same sound until they slowly begin to separate and pick themselves apart again. Boasting a similar intro but towards a different end, "Rage: Man" sways back and forth until the guitars flood in, pounding forth in complete harmony and forcing you to suddenly pay attention, all the while continually punctuated by the same piano melody as though nothing else had changed. "Christmas Song" is the most straightforward and simple of these tracks, and with a basic piano line becomes one of the most understated songs in their catalogue. Something about it rings true, and it becomes haunting in its accuracy. By the time "Rollerball" washes over you, you won't be able to remember where you even began. Overall, it becomes a range of dark sonics enveloped over and again in warm feedback, without lyrics to punctuate the time or add anything more than the sound given. It becomes a line of sounds to fill the small spaces in a day, to reveal something epic in nothingness, and by taking away vocals, they have managed to make it all the more human. Practically the opposite of all that "Like Herod"—an abrasive track from *Young Team*—emulates, everything here is welcoming and familiar. This is the album to listen to in those small moments, fading in and out of sleep, waiting for the storm: caught up in atmospheric, everything fades, only to become all the more relevant.

Spinning, spinning: Fennesz, *Venice*; Shellac, *1000 Hurts*; Man Man, *Man in a Blue Turban With a Face*; Gillian Welch, *Soul Journey*; V/A, *Wailing Ultimate!*



Scott J. Morrow (SJM)

Faith No More, *King for a Day, Fool for a Lifetime*. All right, you probably either love or hate Mike Patton's vocals, but come on. Is it humanly possible to not sing along with this album? Sing along and rock out, that is! Yeah, Jim Martin's tenure ended with *Angel Dust*, but most of the greatness inherent in *King for a Day* would not have been possible without parting ways. Jazz-lounge classic "Evidence" would have been a shell of itself without Mr. Bungle guitarist Trey Spruance, and I'm not sure that Martin would have endorsed a melodramatic stanza with Icarus similes in "Just a Man." Yet for all of its departures from *Angel Dust* and its predecessors, *King for a Day* makes unnecessary (but appreciated) amends to the "rock only" curmudgeons with "Get Out," "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies," "Digging the Grave," et al. Funny story: the riff under the "you can't kill it" squeals in "Cuckoo for Caca" once nearly rocked my head clean off. And besides, how many albums can boast to house a song with "It's always funny until someone gets hurt, and then it's just hilarious!" as lyrical content? Not many! So give it up, all of you anti-quoted Faith No More grumps, and recognize *King for a Day, Fool for a Lifetime* for what it is: the band's greatest recording.

History tells us that you are: The Advantage, *Elf-Titled*; Messer Chups, *Crazy Price*; Trevor Dunn's Trio-Convulsant, *Sister Phantom Owl Fish*; Every Time I Die, *Gutter Phenomenon*; Amon Tobin, *Out From Out Where*.



(Mr.) Dana Morse (DM)

Chamberlain, *Fate's Got a Driver*. I'm not too familiar with the story behind this band. Once called Split Lip, this Midwestern hardcore band turned into an emo-rock band under the new moniker Chamberlain. This album in particular was recorded as Split Lip and then re-mastered or re-recorded as to document their fresh beginning. Regardless, I bought it on whim when I found it in a used shop. At this particular time in my life, I was a bit more open to newer things and newer forms of music outside my punk roots. Side note: emo at this time was more than just Dashboard Confessional, and included the whole post-hardcore movement during the mid '90s. Anyway, Chamberlain made music that was both solid rock and eloquent at the same time. There was almost a forcefulness to the music that was in no way in your face but still needed to be recognized. At the same time, they didn't come off as whiney or needy like emo bands of today. This was a solid rock album that would help make the perfect mixtape or to listen to while having a couple of beers. In other words: perfect.

What gets (Mr.) Dana going: Ho-Ag (reviewed this issue); Pegboy, *Cha Cha Damore*; Why?, *Sandollars EP*; Wool, *Box Set*; a whole lot of 7 seconds.



Brian Moss (BM)

Built To Spill: *Keep It Like A Secret* Certain songs or albums, like an old familiar scent, have the ability to tap into the senses and instantaneously drag us back to a brief moment or time since passed. When blessing my ears with the likes of *Keep It Like A Secret*, I can't help but being transformed back to a warm evening that took place in the spring of 2000. I was driving over the San Mateo bridge to some obscure South Bay Area show as the sun was laying itself down to

the West of the coastal hills, shimmering like a precious metal over the Bay's surface. Stretching out towards destiny, the bridge arched and beckoned. A warm breeze was flooding in through a window rolled all the way down, pampering my cheeks with soft caresses and hinting at the bounty of summer to come. Alas, my hallmark hippie writing career is taking off in front of my eyes! The point of the matter is that never in my life has a record matched my surroundings and inner-chi with such perfection. *Keep It Like A Secret*, explodes with appropriately suited sparkling clean massive production and notions of arena inclined aggressive-folk psychedelics, that at the time of its 1999 release, seemed to be fading into the archives of the sixties and seventies. While lo-fi advocates might disagree, it's the infusion of the refined recording methods and modernized rock-god songwriting found on *Keep It Like A Secret* with the band's to be expected disjointed

who handled some production duties on early Yeah Yeah Yeah's singles, this Los Angeles quartet epitomizes the most-mediocre of early 1990s "modern rock." Said friend of Karen O possesses one of the most affected whines ever heard, worsened by his tendency to end every phrase with a word ending in "ooh" (usually, that word is oohwith an occasional "you" or "do" for shits and giggles) and inhale dramatically just before shutting his mouth. At one point, he employs his father to not "fax my medicine." As baffling and metaphor-mixing as the line appears, it's indicative of the effort on the whole. Of interest to Brian Eno fans could be the group's cover of "Baby's on Fire," which now stands as my closest perception of a Jesus Jones B-side. Unfortunately, even that sounds cooler than it is. (TS)

Wedgie / Ameroo Records, PO Box 3004, North Hollywood, CA 91601, www.loudeststragely.com

Pages, the – *Creatures of the Earth*, CDEP

The Pages' PR folks would have us believe that the Brooklyn quartet is yet another fashion conscious pop band just looking to stake their claim on the soundtrack for Zach Braff's next movie. But there's an early 1970s back-to-the-earth, good times vibe that accessorizes every hook of this EP like a Florida-sized sideburn. Check the passive-aggressive hippie manta from opener "Creatures of the Earth: "I love living things / and I know / that not everybody agrees," presented with requisite harmonies and rambling, vaguely folksy backing. The Pages appear to be at their best, though, when they stray from formula. "With a Girl Like You" features the EP's only vocals to depart from a three note range, while the British Invasion treatment on "At the end of the Night" actually sounds fresh compared to other offerings. Frankly, I thought bands like this died out a few years back. (TS)

Unsound, PO Box 110996, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.unsoundrecords.com

Pawa up First – *The Scenario CD*

With a name like Pawa up First, I expected these guys to be some sort of techno or rap band: they are anything but. This Canadian trio (plus a slew of guests) must be into every kind of music you can think of, as they incorporate so many styles (and instruments) into their songs. The songs, all of which are instrumental, blend jazz, dub, indie rock, and an occasional country twang to the guitars that results in some really good songs that create an often somber and quiet mood (the standout being "February"). At times when they pick up the pace, this also sounds like it could be a soundtrack to the Blue Man Group as the guitar sound is similar in a couple of songs (especially "Scenario Three"). Of the nine tracks on here, there's not a bad one in the bunch and it is really a solid listen from start to finish. (MXV)

Dare To Care, PO Box 463 Station C, Montreal, Quebec H2L 4K4, Canada

Pricks, the – *Maximum S&M*, CD

Marinating in a brief flirt with the Hives on a split 7", Sweden's the Pricks offer similar fare: solid, catchy, overdriven punk with a tint of trashy garage played at blistering speeds. Spitfire leads bring the charge over an unrelenting rock outfit, topped with bratty vocals. But what the Hives offer in their sex symbol gravitas and calculated matching outfits, the Pricks offer unabashed politically incorrect rock 'n' roll abandon. With songs like "I'll Beat You Anyway" and "Night of the Dil-

do," they're not aiming to appeal to the church's yoga class or the morally outraged punk audience. The Pricks will come into town and put other people's girlfriends on their backs—willing or not. The "we love pissing people off for pissing's sake" image is a little too forced and self-conscious to come off as sincere, but that could be the horrific marketing talking. Regardless, the music is what it should be: obnoxious, confrontational, and no holds barred. (VC)

Rockstar Records, Kurbrunnenstrasse 32-36, 52066 Rockcity Aachen, Germany, www.rockstarrecords.de, www.thepricks.com

Rory Breaker – *The Peep Show*, CD

Hello, power chords! Hello, more power chords! With *The Peep Show*, Rory Breaker (note: band, not person) showcases their nonstop energy and tight sound amid uplifting tracks one might classify under the pop punk genre, reminiscent of early Rufio. Somehow, they're able to pull it off without sounding repetitive. The band falters a bit on "Heavy Step," with a string of strange start / stop sequences, but otherwise, Dan Wagner's vocals pull it through with the help of Brendan McGrogan keeping time on the drums, and of course those power chords I mentioned earlier as well. "Chapter Twelve" and "23" are quick standouts, though at nine tracks long, the time glides by with each song bursting forth from the next, toppling over one another with unmatched intensity. Although they did release this album on their own Dino Rock label, *Peep Show* proves that Rory Breaker is ripe for much bigger things. Highly recommended. (SBM)

Dino Rock Records, www.rorybreaker.com

Rosemary's Babies – *Talking to the Dead CD*

New Jersey was a hotbed of hardcore punk in the early 1980s and spawned a lot of bands that went on to become somewhat legendary (ie: the Misfits). It also contained more than its share of obscure bands that never put out more than one 7" before disbanding, and Rosemary's Babies is a prime example. Die hard Samhain fans and obsessive record collectors will likely know them as the band Eerie Von was in before Samhain and will have likely shelled out a hefty sum to buy their one and only 7" on eBay. This disc compiles that 7" (sans the *Lost in Space* sample at the beginning of "Blood Lust") along with a ton of unreleased studio and live tracks. Musically, it is your typical early '80s hardcore punk that is short, fast, and to the point. The stuff has all been re-mastered and sounds great, even the 7" tracks sound much better than they did on the poorly mastered original vinyl. While they seemed to have spent a good amount of time on the music, the packaging left a lot to be desired. There are no lyrics, no liner notes, and very little information. There are just a couple of pictures and the whole thing was obviously done on the cheap. I would have preferred to have a story about the band to read or at least have the lyrics to follow along with. Cheap packaging aside, it is a pretty decent slice of early '80s hardcore and is a far cheaper alternative to hearing their music than buying the original vinyl. (MXV)

Ghastly Records, www.ghastlyrecords.com

Screamin' Cyn Cyn and the Pons – *Babysit*, CD

With album artwork that depicts a five year-old's boozin' and a used tampon flying through the air, it seems Screamin' Cyn Cyn and the Pons are out to prove . . . something. Intentional irony and satire abound on

Babysit, an album full of inside jokes and buckets of generalized stereotypes. This has been attempted before, but rarely has it been done so well, when Casio beats meet rudimentary musicianship and nonsensical lyrics about random topics (cowboys, carrots, transportation, and Wheat Thins stand out in my mind) give off a veil of mockery amid feigned naïveté and insincerity. That being said, it's pretty damn entertaining, though by no means a serious musical venture. "The Cowboy Song" satirizes every aspect of the typical western stereotype with fake horse clomping and a chorus of "Don't fuck with me!", and is followed up by "Orange," an ode to women who use self tanner (sample: "Your ugly orange fake-o-bake would only fool the color blind"). Granted, some tracks are more successful than others, but the fact that this album was even made kind of blows my mind, in a good way. The male/female call and response gives a nod to the B-52s, while their general shtick is like Gravy Train!!! without the sex drive. If you stop every now and then to realize what their spastic voices are actually saying, it gets even better. A few standout titles: "20% Gay," "Lonely Creepy," "Sexy Bus." Hi-Iarious. (SBM)
Self-released, www.cymcyn.com

Skullflower - Orange Canyon Mind, CD

Skullflower have been around for some time now, peddling feedback soaked, space rock riff marathons. There are probably coded messages within intended for beaming these heavy waves to stoner beings on other planets. There's a lot of layers in this heady stuff: several overdriven guitars paralleling in rhythms and solos, bass heavy synths, white noises, and the steady pounding of a drummer seemingly oblivious to the rest. It must be a sin to play any of these tracks at any level below loud. "Annihilating Angel" has its pretty moments amidst the buzzing of static lightning, with breathy washes deep in the background and breakaway moments of space in the fog of sounds. But, it's atypical as most of these pieces can sound monotonous, particularly with their length, where you have an idea in the first minute of how the next 10 minutes are going to go. But that's kind of the point of these space-rock drone anthems, building and playing on our senses until psychedelized overload. There will be receptive beings for this. (BA)
Crucial Blast, PO Box 364, Hagerstown, MD 21741, www.crucialblast.net

Small Space - No Matter, CD

Stunning and melancholic, the hazy soundscapes that Small Space conjure up are synonymous with the scenery—natural and manmade—of their native home of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Something about listening to this in my big city bedroom on a humid and rainy autumn evening just doesn't feel right. I'm thinking northbound on the I-31, mid-January, snowy, with the sun setting, filtered and numbed by the silhouettes of stripped skeletal trees and the constant Midwestern grey. Suddenly, I'm dazing off, netted in their kettle brewing and moody Yorke-brit-poppings, lost in eerie realms of imagery and imagination. Lethargic and dreamy, the soupy layering and tidal tugs that float seamlessly throughout the course of *No Matter* have left me thoroughly impressed, and against my will, strangely looking forward to the onset of yet another dragged out set of teeth chattering months on the heartland's tundra. I'd imagine this debut long player might be difficult to come across, but if you've got it

RERUNS REISSUES FROM PUNK'S PAST

Action Swingers - S/T, CD

I've often wondered if, and when, grunge would come back. Everything else has, in one way or another. It is possible, on any street close enough to an institution of higher learning, to find girls in leg warmers dangerously close to others in tie-dyed shirts, or dudes in tight leather biker jackets standing around with guys wearing gold chains. In my opinion, grunge is absolutely deserving of a chance at revival. The reissue of the Action Swingers self-titled disc is a stake to that claim. This New York band played with every-fucking-body, from Mudhoney to the God Bullies, the Smashing Pumpkins to Dinosaur Jr. They were in the right place at the right time, but somehow, as is often the case, fame passed them by. Their brand of frenetic, free playing, epitomized by singer/guitarist Ned Hayden's psych-meets-punk amateur guitar wizardry and Bob Bert's relentless, hackneyed drumming, is the kind of stuff that makes you wonder why bands continue to drop thousands of dollars on expensive gear and production, why they insist on relying on talent. The liner notes to this album are full of Hayden's namedropping and unyielding self-deprecation. To some, that sounds obnoxious, but to me that's part of the gag. These guys (and girl, Julia Caltritz of Pussy Galore played with the Swingers on this album) knew they were good, knew they could get by on soul, arrogance, and volume. And now, after ten years, they get their due recognition with this reissue. The remaster clarifies the sound a little from the original release, but don't expect a crystalline production here... why would you want that, anyway? The one setback is the lack of bonus tracks—some demos or live recordings would be nice, and their absence makes this a somewhat unnecessary buy for those who own the original. For those who don't, however, this is essential. (JJC)
Reptilian, 4035 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231, www.reptilianrecords.com

Misery - Next Time / Who's the Fool, CD

This disc is a compilation of miscellaneous short-release recordings, including tracks from a split with fellow crusties Asshass and some demo tracks tacked on at the end. The main course is the full-length material from Misery's 1995 release, *Who's the Fool*. The *Fool is Silence*. On that album's opener, "Who's the Fool," track four on this disc, Misery launch from a slow, atmospheric metal introduction to pummeling, tooth-chipping thrash. Basement production values, coupled with the sometimes epic, extended guitar playing lend this material the feel of early black metal, which is a good thing to these ears. Politically-charged lyrics are run of the mill for this brand of crusty thrash, but Misery manages to focus on the struggles of the individual rather than calling out the Powers That Be. The extras on this disc are a welcome addition, especially the track "Midnight," a sludge-laden dirge that originally appeared as the B-Side to the *Next Time / Full EP*, which predates the *Who's the Fool* material by seven or eight years. While this reissue isn't intended to serve as a complete discography for the band, it is an excellent starting point for anyone interested in hearing these Minneapolis crust-punk forebears.

Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408

Oppressed, the - Skinhead Times, 2XCD

The genius that thought of putting all of The Oppressed's original material (excluding their brand-new 2005 EP) on one two-disc set deserves to be knighted. Oi! doesn't get catchier or more potent than the UK's The Oppressed, and despite their initial split in 1984, they came back with a vengeance in the 1990s and are still going strong. In the end, the violence of the S.H.A.R.P. movement that The Oppressed is attached to did little to enhance the image of skins, but some of the most fun-loving energetic music in punk history emerged from it. Yes, you need this collection! (AE)
Insurgence Records & Publishing, 2 Bloor St. W. Suite 00-184, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3E2, CANADA, www.insurgence.net

Oppressed, the - Won't Say Sorry: The Complete Cover Story, 2xCD

The Oppressed lay claim to the title of "most anti-Fascist band in the world," and use this two-disc set of covers to prove that assertion. The first disc is kind of fun, a bunch of old Oi! and rock-steady covers the band recorded in the '80s. The presence of a drum-machine on some of the early tracks, coupled with the throaty hooligan hollers of singer Roddy Moreno and the typical '80s stiff-and-constant guitar strumming makes these songs almost... cute? Disc two is more militantly anti-fascist, and some of the original lyrics of these songs are reworked to further verbalize the hate against hate. Disc one really did the trick for me, but as I am not readily faced with the threat of Nazis on a day-to-day basis, the second disc lost my interest, although some of the better reggae covers appear towards the end of this side. Recommended primarily for fans of the band or the genre, but you might get a kick out of this long-running set if you are, like me, a sucker for the rigid sound of English punk and Oi! of the '80s, or just enjoy a good, spirited cover song. (JJC)

Insurgence Records & Publishing, 2 Bloor St. W. Suite 100-184, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3E2, Canada, www.insurgence.net

Screeching Weasel - Anthem for a New Tomorrow, CD

It's great that these Screeching Weasel records are available to a new batch of young punks, but other than that, the excitement of listening to these again is wearing thin. Sure, they're all great... classics, even. But I can't really tell the difference between the originals and the re-mastered versions, the liner notes are nothing new to fans that have followed the band over the course of their career, and there are no bonus cuts to even entice a re-buy. *Anthem for a New Tomorrow* is a great fucking record, though, even if Ben Weasel is unhappy with some of the record's sequencing (per the aforementioned liner notes). The theme of growing and changing is evident all over the album, and I'm sure will continue to resonate as strongly with new fans as it did with me years back, because *Anthem* stands on its own as a great record even without the attached nostalgia. "Claire Monet," "Leather Jacket," "Totally"... the list of great songs goes on and on. Worth picking up if you don't already own it, but not worth a re-buy if you're already a fan. (DH)

Asian Man, PO Box 35585, Mole Sereno, CA 95030

Screeching Weasel - How to Make Enemies & Irritate People, CD

I'm always happy to sing the praises of Chi-town's finest brats, and between Asian Man's recent re-issues and Fat's upcoming Weasel Mania collection, it seems as though somebody still cares to listen. Originally recorded in 1994 during the golden age of pop punk, *How to Make Enemies* is arguably the band's forgotten gem, sandwiched between 1993's deal-breaker *Anthem for a New Tomorrow* and their scandalous Fat Wreck Chords debut (also coincidentally their biggest seller) *Bark Like a Dog*. Anyone remember when bands were ostracized for such things? Anyway, the album's major claim to fame has always been the inclusion of Green Day's Mike Dirnt on bass who replaced Dan Vapid. The move shocked hundreds and managed to throw the editorial section of *Maximum Rockroll* into a tizzy. Back in the real world, Dirnt's presence did little to throw off the band's already signature sound, although he does treat us to a nifty lick to start "Planet of the Apes." In fact, Dirnt's biggest contribution to Screeching Weasel was probably wearing their t-shirt while inciting a riot at Woodstock '94, increasing the band's name recognition exponentially. As far as the remastering job, not much here is changed, sans a few new pictures and some liner notes from Mr. Weasel himself. Hell, if it ain't broke... (MS)
Asian Man Records, P.O. Box 35585 Monte Sereno, CA 95030 www.asianmanrecords.com

Terror - Lowest of The Low, CD

Bridge 9 Records originally put this out as a nine song EP. Now Trustkill Records has expanded it to 22 songs. As a bonus, you get live tracks from Tokyo, their side of the Ringworm split 7" and a Dag Nasty cover. The Dag Nasty cover ("Can I Say") was great and would have bowled me over if the drums hadn't been so loud and separate in the mix. This was light years better when it was just an EP. The cover and split 7" songs could have used better production. The live stuff sounds pretty mediocre. You can't really hear the vocals. As an EP, *Lowest of the Low* was one of the quintessential modern hardcore EPs. The production was thick and punchy. The songs were fast and heavy. Their lyrics were negative but well written. But now Trustkill has tainted and bloated it. I guess they're trying to give you more for your money, but some things are better off left alone. If you prefer CDs with plenty of useless, add-on garbage, then this one's right up your alley. (DA)

Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Ln., Tinton Falls, NJ 07724 www.trustkill.com

Totimoshi - Mysterioso?, CD

This is a reissue of Totimoshi's excellent second album from 2002. The bonus stuff you get with this "re-tooled" version is limited to a bunch of CD-ROM extras (tour videos, photos, etc.). It would've been nice to have a few extra bonus tracks or session outtakes thrown in, but oh well. I suppose that's not really necessary because the album itself rocks pretty hard. The quick reference for this California based three-piece's sound is early '90s era Melvins with a little more restraint, a way leaner guitar tone, and more double-bass drum pedal grinding. Produced by Alex Newport (Fudge Tunnel/Nailbomb/Theory Of Ruin), *Mysterioso?* is an album full of catchy riffs,

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syropy pop charm (which was far more predominant on their earlier releases) and singer/guitarist Doug Martsch's wit as both a finger fretter and lyricist that make the album *Built To Spill's* pinnacle opus. Adhering to my number one qualification of enjoyable artistry (homage to the past with progression into the future), the band pushes the limits, but clearly takes notes from the triumphs and errors of the musical milestones of their upbringing (a point which can also be cited in the introspective lyrics of "You Were Wrong"). This record has it all: irresistibility and complexity. Sing-a-longs and seamlessly masterminded song plot twists. For better or worse, my generation lacks in major label rock epics that we can be proud of; this release sits at the top of my charts. Find yourself a scenic locale, put this in your system, prepare for the release of the hippie that's been hiding inside of you, and make history happen.

Lookout hemp wear and commune living, here I come: Neil Young, *On the Beach*; Bob Dylan, *Highway 61 Revisited*; Led Zeppelin, IV; Cat Stevens, *Catch Bull at Four*; Simon and Garfunkel, *Bookends*.



Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

Kid Dynamite, S/T. Kid Dynamite didn't stick around long, a fact that probably added to their legendary status in the punk scene. Still, within a very short time the band released two memorable full lengths that defined the "melodicore" sound, as well as a posthumous double disc compilation of B-sides, demos, and rare tracks. Not bad for such a short lived band. The formula on their self-titled debut was simple: short, fast, loud, aggressive, and angry punk rock. It worked remarkably well and the record was an instant classic. The gruff, screamed vocals were a perfect match for the driving guitars and thunderous drumming, which resulted in a full and boisterous hardcore sound. What truly set the band's first LP apart, however, was the remarkable ability to pervade this sound with melody. Yes, melody. Despite the fact that a good portion of the album's 19 songs checked in at under 90 seconds, the songs were all extremely catchy without losing any intensity. And yes, ultimately it's that mixture of intensity and melody that keeps me coming back to the record year after year. Songs like "Bookworm" and "Fuckuturn" will always find their way onto the mixes I make and remind me of a time when melodic hardcore still meant something.

Check these out, too: Lifetime, *Jersey's Best Dancers*, *Against Me!*, *Searching for a Former Clarity*, *Crime In Stereo*, *Explosives and the Will to Use Them*, *Strike Anywhere*, *Change is a Sound*, *Hot Water Music*, *No Division*.



Missy Paul (MP)

Arab Strap, Philophobia. "Philophobia" means fear of love, but in the context of Arab Strap's second album it should mean the devastation, betrayal, and hatred that can result from love. Yes, it's a truly disturbing album but also great. Song after song, vocalist Aidan Moffat speaks his unsettling lyrics, which are the centerpiece, over Malcolm Middleton's minimalistic guitar strumming and basic drum beats. Often it's just one synthetic drumbeat or one chord on repeat. This lyrical and musical starkness creates the feelings of tension and discomfort, because we've either been there or are afraid of being there. The album opens with "Packs of Three," a song about cheating lovers confronting one another. Ending with Moffat moaning the line, "It's far too easy to blame it on the drinking," you get the idea there is little regret, just resignation about the behavior. "New Birds" is about running into an ex-girlfriend at a bar and could be the "uplifting" song. Moffat laments the old flame, who is throwing herself at him, and tells us about the girlfriend waiting for him at home. Over the cymbal beat and quiet guitar, Moffat decides to make the right choice, but in his tone you get the feeling he'd rather have the ex-girlfriend. The album continues on with songs about lust, drunkenness, impotence, shame, and disappointment. So why listen? Because the mood captured and conveyed is done so well, it's too powerful to overlook. You might cringe, but you can't ignore it, and it's this disconcerting beauty that should be heard.

In-between repeat Extraordinary Machine listens, I'm checking out: Broken Social Scene, *S/T*; Jesus and Mary Chain, *Live in Concert*; Speakeasy, *Demo recordings*; Acid House Kings, *Sing Along With* (reviewed this issue); Fiona Apple, *Extraordinary Machine*.



Rex Reason (RR)

Saint Vitus, Born Too Late. The contradiction that always struck me in Black Flag's otherwise great "Depression" was the tempo and energy. When I'm depressed, I feel infinitely far from the prevailing energy of the song. I feel a lot like side two of Flag's *My War* or like the absolutely muck-laden guitars and lonesome cries of Saint Vitus' *Born Too Late*. Fittingly, the subject matter of the album is crippling addiction, feeling out of place, and depression. The guitars are so saturated in pure sonic mud as they crawl along, it's like they'll start playing backwards at any moment. Scott "Wino" Weinrich of a million like-minded bands had been brought in for vocals at this point, and his voice fits these tales of woe perfectly. Still, Vitus was always Dave Chandler's band, and his guitar tells the tales he wrote just as well as Wino's voice. The CD version of this album is the one to get, as it includes the 12" EP with a fitting cover of Black Flag's "Thirsty and Miserable". Slip this in and feel your face slide right off the skull.

Five steps to a better you: Turbonegro, *Party Animals*; Bongzilla, *AmeriJuanican*; Unknown Instructors, *The Way Things Work*; Reptoids, *Park a Tiger*; Earth, *Hex*; or *Printing in the Infernal Method*.



Kyle Ryan (KR)

Archers of Loaf, Icky Mettle. Former Archers of Loaf frontman Eric Bachmann has found success as a solo artist in Crooked Fingers, but his Neil Diamond-esque crooning in that group just makes me long for the days of the Archers of Loaf, his stellar '90s indie rock band. This, their 1994 debut, established the Archers' formidable style of noisy indie rock with catchy, off-kilter guitars, punk intensity and hooks galore. The hooks were almost subversive in their sound; they weren't traditionally poppy, but they were just so catchy, particularly on the stellar opening track "Web in Front," the rocking "Wrong" or "Plumb Line" (with the killer lyrics "she's an indie rocker / nothing's going to stop her"). The songs had a sort of Pavement-esque slackness to them, but they had too much of a punk influence to devolve into Stephen Malkmus-style self-indulgence. "Wrong" is perhaps the album's highlight, an intense kiss off, I imagine, to an old girlfriend: "You got it all wrong / you can't get it

in you, the efforts of seeking will provide you with an ample reward. (BM)

Speedy Wagon Records, www.smallspacemusic.com

Speed of Life – Mainstay, CD

Every now and then a record comes along that is so fantastically awful—a musical abomination—that it almost seems like the greatest satire ever recorded. If it were just terrible—like sloppy, stupid, or pretentious—it wouldn't be noteworthy. But *Mainstay* is so unbelievably god awful, so mind-blowingly terrible that it deserves a place in the Smithsonian exhibit called "Terrible Music of the Early 21st Century." Speed of Life play excruciatingly earnest alt-rock with some of the most forehead-slappingly trite lyrics this side of Ashlee Simpson. Every note and word positively drips with Cheez Whiz, from the wanky guitar solos, to bizarre break-beat drumming, to hokey-is-putting-it-nicely lyrics. *Mainstay's* shortest song is 4:20 (knowing these guys, that was probably intentional), with other tracks clocking in 7:33, roughly 10 minutes and an eight minute three part song called "Peace in the Warzone," with its subjections "Telemetry," "Dust of Life" and "Fundamental Need." What is this, Yes? Every song goes on forever, particularly the "hidden track," which closes with a seven minute jam session. Then there are the lyrics, which try so hard to sound deep that they come off as moronic: "behind the veil, into your eyes / a tear will shed on the door of time" or "taken to your eyes, you reach me inside / taken by surprise, I feel that I should hide . . . so if I'm your island / won't you breathe into me?" Dear god—the mixed metaphors, the hokey rhymes, the stultifying generic-ness of it all. It's as if the worst possible elements of rock 'n' roll have all come together for one album. If it weren't so excruciating, it'd be funny. (KR)

Activesoundz, 11 Hope St., 3rd Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11211, activesoundz.com

Subjects, the – S/T, CDEP

The artwork for this EP, a paper montage of houses and instruments, would give the impression that the Subjects is a young band—which is only halfway true. Young, perhaps, but not inexperienced: two teachers, two students, and four tracks of unfettered pop hooks make up the general shtick of the Subjects and this self-titled EP; and despite those facts, this is earnest and worthwhile rock that becomes more compelling than endearing in the end. Like the Walkmen, they have learned the trick of taking a simple idea and lending it a huge sound—check out "The Best of Us" for proof. Or, if you happen to be looking for an infectious nugget that'll stay stuck in your head for hours, perhaps "Seems to Me" would be a better start; either way, though, you'll win with this band. (SBM)

Self-released, www.gosubjectsgo.com

Swift, Richard – The Richard Swift Collection, Vol. 1, CD

Richard Swift is the singer / songwriter others strive to be. Without sounding like he's trying, Swift creates memorable songs that drift and float in and out of your mind. This collection compiles his two albums, *The Novelist* and *Walking Without Effort*, both of which illustrate the immense talent at hand. Reminiscent of Andrew Bird, the songs on *The Novelist* are airy compositions of orchestration. Pianos, bells, harps, and drums flow into the arrangements, giving each a

lush, full sound. This subtle, yet effective, instrumentation is best shown on "Lonely Nights," "Looking Back, I Should've Been Home More," and the haunting title track. The second half, *Walking Without Effort* is more lo-fi indie rock. Acoustic strumming and smooth vocals are the centerpiece of these songs, with the occasional drumbeat, handclap, or horn mixed in. Though the lesser of the two recordings, *Walking Without Effort* isn't without its charms and Swift's folk stylings keep the listener drawn in. On songs like "As I Go" and "Mexico (1977)," we can see that Swift can wear more than one hat, and do it well. Highlighting his gift for melody and good songwriting, this collection is a treat and I urge you not to sleep on it. (MP)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. Second Street, Bloomington, IN 47403, www.secretlycanadian.com

Talcum, Joe Jack – Home Recordings 1984-1997, CD

Joe Jack Talcum, of Dead Milkmen infamy, has recently released a 13 year catalog of homemade solo tracks. In rare moments, the novelty and giggles of the painfully mangled guitars coupled with key stripping and nonsensical vocals that are found scattered throughout the patience thinning twenty four tracks have their allure. That being said, the most memorable part of listening to this album was having both of my roommates, on two separate occasions, walk into my bedroom, eyes wide and mouths gaping, asking, "Dude, what the fuck are you listening to?" Given that I've had many a fine stereo moments with the Dead Milkmen over the years (they win my Best Band to Listen to While Showering award), and given I generally hate marketing pitches (especially when the misfortune of others is utilized), the following quote, filed in the provided press kit under "selling points & publicity," was rather upsetting: "The Dead Milkmen have been featured recently in news media across the country from CNN to MTV and countless newspapers when bass player Dave Blood committed suicide in 2004." (BM)

Valiant Death Records, 3337 Poplar Dr. Smithfield, VA 23430, [www.valiantdeath.com](http://valiantdeath.com)

Teenage Casket Company – Dial It Up, CD

Hey kids, remember when you first heard Nirvana, and it sounded like a total revelation 'cause the only other rock music you heard on the radio at that time was crappy hair metal that all the jocks liked? You know, bands, like Poison and Skid Row? Well, Teenage Casket Company seem to come from a place where Nirvana never happened, picking up the crappy hair metal torch and fuckin' running with it. When that Darkness record came out, camps seemed to be evenly divided with regards to whether they were being serious or whether they were being ironic. I have absolutely no doubt the Teenage Casket Company are being serious. Now that all the teenage jocks seem to like what's being called "punk" these days, perhaps Teenage Casket Company is just a step ahead of the inevitable pendulum swing. (JC)

Trash Pit Records, www.trashpit.co.uk

13 & God – S/T, CD

Operating as a self-described supergroup, 13 & God is a full-length collaboration between Anticon regulars Themselves and post-punks-turned-experimental-pop-hoppers the Notwist. This self-titled release isn't much of a departure of style for either group, and the resulting mixture is probably what one would imagine. What is surprising to me, however, is that I like the mix-

ture more than the individual components. The Notwist lend their patented acoustic and woodwind elements to the big beats and odd stylings of *Themselves*. Doseone's atypical rapping technique is featured on a few tracks, but it is far from domineering. Meanwhile, the instrumentation has some guest spots by piano, vibraphone, and *Speak-n-Spell*. I suppose the biggest knock on the project would be that a number of the tracks sound less like collaboration and more like the respective artists featuring the other, and that's a fair criticism. The album sort of peters out around the seventh track, but there are enough standout tunes to keep *13 & God* interesting, if only for a little while. Pre-existing fans of either group will likely be into this, but it's something of an acquired taste for the rest of us. (SJM)

Anticon Records, www.anticon.com

Toy Dolls, the – *Our Last Album?*, CD

It's tough to review a band with over a dozen records (and more than a dozen singles to boot) dating all the way back to 1979. The Toy Dolls' newest record still sounds a lot like they always have, thanks to Olga's great, often emulated sound. Imagine being slagged for having a typical sound when you are the very ones who created the genre. The fanfare of the Dolls is lackluster in the States, but in Europe they are appreciated for pioneering a sound that we often associate with the mighty Dickies. There is absolutely no reason for a fan of silly pop songs not to dig the Toy Dolls. So is *Our Last Album?* a necessary purchase? On their own website they rate it as their fifth favorite album. Often bands will always say their newest is their favorite, so their honesty is appreciated and about right on, in my opinion. If you own no other Toy Dolls records then there are anywhere from three to six that you should own first. Their debut, *Dig That Groove*, is essential to every record collection. (EA)

SOS Records, PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92878, www.sosrecords.us

Toys That Kill – *Don't Take my Clone b / w Breaking Out 7"*

This is the second Toys That Kill 7" I've been assigned to review, so for the second time I find myself thinking that I need to buy their other releases. I'm gonna do it this time, I swear, because I'm obviously missing out. Toys That Kill are the kind of band that I wish people were talking about when they say "pop punk" and not the emo crybaby stuff that passes for pop punk these days. "Don't Take my Clone" sounds like Black Flag having a go at Briefs-style pogo punk, and it's catchy like the flu. The B-side, "Breaking Out," is a cover of a song from the cult flick *Shock Treatment*; both the song and the film were written by Rocky Horror writer Richard O'Brien. To say that this is an obscure choice for a cover is putting it mildly, and Toys That Kill rock it the fuck out. This is essentially a perfect single. Buy now. (JC)

Dirtmap Records, 2615 SE Clinton St., Portland, OR 97206, www.dirtmaprecords.com

USS Horsewhip – *Wants you Dead*, CD

I love this band. Their first EP was one of the first records I reviewed for this magazine a little over two years ago. When I heard they had a new album coming out, I made sure I could be the one to review it for *Punk Planet*; then I listened to it three times in a row. Simply put, USS Horsewhip *Wants you Dead* is a killer record. It's heavy and catchy. It's intricate and moody. It's

nothing particularly original, yet I can't think of anything to compare it to. Any attempt at a comparison has a "but," and still doesn't quite capture it: "kinda like the Hot Snakes, but heavier," or "a little bit like the Jesus Lizard, but not as fucked up and drugged out." The guitar playing is consistently great, whether they're banging out big riffs or playing intertwining lines or peeling off sweet leads. The vocals are impassioned and powerful, while the lyrics are compelling and thoughtful. You can tell these guys put everything they have into this band, and they don't give a shit about being part of any scene or trying to make it big. Highest recommendation. (JC)

New Regard Media, PO Box 5706, Bellingham, WA 98227, www.newregardmedia.com

Veda – *The Weight of an Empty Room*, CD

Veda, like the Rocking Horse Winner before them, tows a line that only barely separates their emo friendly anthems from mainstream pap. Listening to *The Weight of an Empty Room*, I can't help but feel like I'm shopping for pre-teen female clothing in a store like Delia's or the Limited. Combining the big sweeping riffs similar to late era Sense Field with upbeat, polished hooks, Veda has created a number of earnest sentiments but come across too affable and gooey for serious consideration. At times, singer Kristen May offers a glimmer of hope, which is probably due to the vocal similarities between her and Elizabeth Elmore of Sarge and the Reputation. But lyrics like, "Should we even wonder why our hearts are torn?" on "The Falling Kind" feel too much like diary entries that should have been thrown away the morning after: both are slightly embarrassing and nothing to be taken to heart. (MS)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084 Kansas City, MO 64141 www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Wide Right – *Sleeping on the Couch*, CD

My first comment on opening this disc is that someone's mom was in a band. After feeling a little guilty for saying such a dumb thing, I realized that was a perfect comment after listening to *Sleeping on the Couch*. In fact, Leah Archibald has two children and most of the songs are just about being a 30-something female with two kids growing up in Buffalo. This isn't a typical rock'n'roll record. The music was recorded by the fabulous Jim Diamond (White Stripes, Dirtbombs, etc.), and the band features Dave Rick on guitar (ex-King Missile, Bongwater). So with good musicianship and a great recording studio, the sound couldn't get any better. The performance doesn't hold any extra excitement to it—just plodding along in the realm of mid-tempo rock and roll. What makes Wide Right different are the lyrics. Being a father of two, I can relate to many of the lyrics, at least from my wife's perspective. If you aren't in your 30s with kids then this disc probably won't appeal to you at all, but if you enjoy a song about drinking at 8 a.m. or dealing with school counselors then this is for you. Parent rock? Parent-core? I think we just invented a new genre. (EA)

Pop Top Records, 287 14th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.poptoprecords.com

Windsor for the Derby – *Giving up the Ghost*, CD

Eleven years—quite a long time for anything. Especially a long time to be in a band with one other person. But Windsor for the Derby has pulled it off, and for the past eleven years, they have made six full lengths, as well as added upon their live show

RERUNS CONTINUED

obtusely funky rhythms, and huge drumming. That's really the heaviest part of their sound—drummer Johaïn Zamora's propulsive Bonham-meets-Pete Sandoval playing. When they wanna open up a section of a tune and really let it ride, they let the drums stretch out (rather than an increase in volume or a wild guitar solo) to take things to the next level. That gives 'em a subtlety to their style that should make their music palatable to indie rock fans as well as the stoner/doom crowd. And like The Melvins,

they function well as a unit, really playing off one another. Actually, my only criticism of Totimoshi is that they sort of lack their own voice, at times aping King Buzzo & company a bit too closely (right down to the clenched teeth vocal style). I definitely recommend this disc, but the record store geek in me has to also strongly urge listeners to check out the roots of this stuff as laid out in The Melvins' seminal *Bullhead*, *Houdini*, and *Stoner Witch* albums. (AJ)

Crucial Blast, P.O. Box, 364 Hagerstown, MD 21741, www.crucialblast.net

DEMOLITION DERBY CD-R REVIEWS

Amnesty – *E.P.*, CDR

This is what got most of us into punk rock. One two-song CD-R of lo-fi garage with one song about homework and the other about who knows what. This came with a one-sided page that is passed of as a zine, with an introduction and one show review, kinda. This would be so funny if it wasn't done in earnest, just \$2 ppd. (EA)

Amnesty, 644 Highland Park, Tupelo, MS 38801

DP3 – *S/T*, CD-R

Avant-garde chamber music mixed with be bop and NOLA funeral dirges. Fairly unexciting. (AJ)

Self-released, www.dp3online.com

Disnihl – *demo* CD

Four tracks of melodic crust punk (a la Tragedy and Wolfpack) meets thrash metal riffing. With ex-members of Black Army Jacket. This is pretty ripping. (AB)

Disnihl c/o Tom, 150-16 77th Avenue, Kew Gardens Hills, NY 11567, www.myspace.com/disnihl

Down Like the Rest – *S/T*, CDR

Reminded me of the first Modern Life Is War 7", except more moshy and less epic. Another great hardcore demo with no contact info listed. (DA)

No contact info provided

Drip, the – *S/T*, CD-R

Nice trashy punk rock and roll from this Chicago outfit. Better songwriting than most of this genre. They'd go over opening for bands like New Bomb Turks or the Dwarves. (JC)

www.thedriprecords.com

Gunmen, the – *Three Hits in the Making...*, CD

Highly distorted raucous punk driven by a strong rhythm section and throaty vocals. This would look good on your shelf next to that Misfits collection. (BN)

No Contact Info Provided

Hartford Whalers, the – *Demo!* CD

Nicely done release by this Michigan band. This is pop-punk, but expect much more than mere pedestrian angst and hook-laden rock songs. Highly recommended! (JC)

Salinas Records, www.salinasrecords.cjb.net

IAD – *Blow It Up*, CD-R

IAD play solid mainline punk with a Pennywise influence. They're from Copperas Cove, TX, and would probably be signed already if they lived in California. (AE)

www.angelfire.com/band2/itspunkiad/main.html

In Absentia – *Live at the Complex*, CD-R

In Absentia's demo takes a stab at mixing spastic, ambient and prog-core moments together. The results are less than satisfactory. *Live at the Complex* is also full of what clean-channel Isis moments would sound like if Isis couldn't write music. (SJM)

Sinuous Records, www.sinuousrecords.org

Lambert the Sheepish Lion – *Rediculous Pudding*, CD-R

Interesting lo-fi sounds, nonsense rapping, and put-on accents are what you'll find on this bizarre circus of a demo. (JC)

Faith Cannon Records, No contact info provided.

Mudd, Ryan & the Stuff – *S/T*, CDR

Hey, I can sing kind of like Dave Vanian, so we sound like the Damned, right? Wrong. Generic and unoriginal punk that blends into the pack. (DA)

www.Ryanmudd.net

Peanut Butter Jones – *Electric Coffee*, CD-R

I'm not quite sure where to begin with Mr. Peanut Butter Jones. The best description of the 25 tracks that comprise *Electric Coffee* would likely be one of weird, puerile electro-hop with Casio bleeps and whipsy vocals about commercials. This could not have been recorded on anything better than a four-track. Seriously, don't subject yourself to this. (SJM)

Faith Cannon, Box 99, Afton, WY 83110, thingswelost.tripod.com

Presidents, the – *Demos*, CD-R

In case you don't pick up the Ramones influence, they load their demo with four Ramones covers. The band is from North Carolina but the vocals have a weird European accent. Not without its charm, but it gets old by the time the 19 songs run their course. (JC)

www.myspace.com/longlivepunk

Rapist, the – *S/T*, demo

Various samples collide with furious hardcore. Entertaining, yes. Too much screaming for my taste though. I feel their song title, "Goodbye Is A Sharp Piece of Metal Gently Inserted In Your Throat" sums up their existence pretty well. (MB)

Elysiumentertainment743@yahoo.com

Velocitytut – *Specimen*, CD-R

This Japanese outfit offers eerie atmospheres that explode into demented, cacophonous bursts and then evaporate. Terror so jarring, it scared me shitless. (VC)

Labour Ltd, 212-06 Nakazato Tarami-cho, Nishisonogi-gun Nagasaki, 859-0405 Japan, www.d2.dion.ne.jp/~electio/LABOUR/LABOUR.html

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

right / why don't you come down from off my back / and won't you get yourself a job somewhere / away from me? / 'cause I don't want to see your face anymore / 'cause I don't want you on my case anymore." I actually played this once during a shift at my college radio station, KCOU, and this girl I had been dating called me and said, "Are you playing this for me?" I wasn't, but apparently she picked up on the song's message. Good times. As time went on, the Archers became hit or miss, but pretty much everything on this album is solid; the Archers were indie darlings for a reason—this album has 13 of them. It definitely sounds like it was made in the mid-'90s, but few bands had the Archers' skills, and Icky Mettles is one of the great indie-rock albums of the time.

Stuck a pin in your backbone: Latterman, *No Matter Where We Go*; Kanye West, *Late Registration*; Sufjan Stevens, *Illinois*; lots of Face To Face.



Matthew Siblo (MS)

The Pietasters, Oolooloo. There's nothing less flattering for a supposed musical tastemaker to be caught praising a third-wave ska record, but it's a risk I'm willing to take for Oolooloo. And what's the fun praising an album that's universally accepted anyway? Certainly considered one of the more reputable acts of the Two Tone revival, the Pietasters had a knack for incorporating a wide variety of influences to the pot, combining everything from R&B and jazz to its slow, rock steady vibe. This, the Pietasters' second album, saw the band heading towards a more soulful sound as exemplified by the laid back sass of "Tell you Why" and the punchy reinterpretation of the Four Tops classic "Same Old Song." But it was the Pietasters' infamous grit that made them so memorable. They had a knack of fusing punk's energy with ska's rhythm, without ever sounding like a cheesy hybrid. Songs like the rebel rousing "Maggie Mae" and "Girl Take it Easy" only hinted at the infamous trouble these boys caused on the road. Not a band to stop at mere innuendo, the sleaze is fully spelled out on the "Biblical Sense" and even more so on the unsavory ode to prostitution, "Pleasure Bribe." But lead singer Stephen Jackson's gruff yet snide delivery kept things from ever getting too heavy. Sadly, due to the demise of its original label, Moon Ska, Oolooloo in its original incarnation is long out of print. But fear not, ska fans, as Morpheus Records has recently released a Pietasters compilation, the appropriately titled 92-96, which compiles over 60 tracks (that's a lot of ska) of material, including Oolooloo in its entirety. That should be enough to tide us all over until the fourth wave comes to shore.

Rock for Sustained Capitalism! Against Me!, *Searching for a Former Clarity*; Rouge Wave, *Descended Like Vultures*; XTC, *Oranges and Lemons*; Screeching Weasel, *Weasel Mania*; Belle and Sebastian, *Dear Catastrophe Waitress*.



Tony Stasiek (TS)

Urge Overkill, Saturation. I was brainwashed by the Chicago music writers of the early 1990s. It's not necessarily a bad thing—I chalk it up to a confluence of well-hyped bands in one city at one time, my own musically impressionable vulnerabilities and some dudes who could analyze Billy Corgan into the next Walt Whitman in print. Thus, I found myself stomachaching Veruca Salt, truly believing that I could not fight the "Seether." I could buy Liz Phair as a monotone genius. I could endure each Smashing Pumpkins overdose, stylistically and otherwise. But the one CD from that era I actually still listen to is "sell out" effort for post-glam trio Urge Overkill. For its first 18 minutes, *Saturation* is a masterpiece of power pop consistency on par with the first sides of the Cars' debut and Big Star's #1 Record. "Sister Havana" rides a sleeker-than-grunge riff that's flipped in reverse on "Tequila Sunrise." Soon comes the losing it idiosyncrasy of "Woman 2 Woman," which somehow managed to slip the line "Girl what's your sign / Vagittarius?" past David Geffen. The kicker, though, is track number seven—a standard, midtempo tale of lovelorn dejection that takes a decidedly nonstandard title: "Bottle of Fur," e.g., one that's "missing the smell of her." Now, the selling point to this line is in the band members' presentation. All three of them goofballs, the dudes of Urge Overkill still seemed to know something I didn't. They sang like Neil Diamond when their contemporaries howled like Tad Doyle. They drove mid-'70s convertibles before the pimps did. They wore medallions. They appeared to be just on the verge of bloating out like over microwaved footloongs, which they soon did. And now, they were getting serious about the scent of a woman in a jar, which also had something to do with displaced, hairy skin. Was it code? A slurred, misplaced rhyme? Was a "Bottle of Fur" something dirty? Would I ever encounter one? This, my music writers could not tell. Pop music, that's why I keep you around.

We no longer blame Michael Brown and FEMA for: Big Boys, *The Skinny Elvis*; the Foundry Field Recordings, *Battle Brigades 7*; The New Pornographers, *Twin Cinema*; Ten in the Swear Jar, *Accordion Solo*; USS Horsewhip, *USS Horsewhip Wants you Dead*.



Mike Vinikour (MXY)

Peace Corpse, Quincy 7. When I was a freshman in high school, a couple punk friends of mine who were a year older than me had a radio show on our high school's radio station. Not having much money or access to go find punk records, I used to tape these shows as my fix for more punk music. One of the many standouts I discovered through them was this Peace Corpse 7. It was their song, "Jocko Macho" that made me want to check them out. When I eventually bought a copy of the record, what I hadn't yet heard more than lived up to my expectations. This six song 7" is a perfect piece of early 1980s hardcore. The Pushhead cover art is among my favorite record covers of all of punk rock and the songs were all top notch. The lyrics dealt with the happenings of the time, macho jock punks at shows ruining things, "Quincy" (they had an episode dealing with the "evils of punk"), and, of course, some politics. Musically, they were pretty straight up hardcore, but weren't afraid to slow things down a bit such as the classic, "Dead in a Pile of Chairs." This was such a huge record for the punks in my school, they all had the Peace Corpse logo painted on their leather jackets we had the stickers on our skateboards. Sadly I never got to see the band play, but this 7" still gets regular play on my turntable more than 20 years after I first bought it and it deserves a lot more recognition than it typically gets. I am glad to see it got reissued on CD as part of the Toxic Shock 7" collection on Dr. Strange, so people who missed it the first time can at least get the music.

Recent platters spun at Combustion Manor: The Locust, *Safety Second*, *Body Last*; Skinny Puppy, *Vivisect VI*; V/A, *Keats Rides a Harley*; Flower Leperds, *The Original Group*; Curl Up and Die, *The One Above All the End of All That Is*.

to include a keyboard player and drummer. Now, on *Giving up the Ghost*, Windsor for the Derby has recorded ten dreamy, space pop tracks. Their drones, repetition, and ambient-like qualities bring a kind of avant-garde folk approach, similar to that of Animal Collective (though Animal Collective has taken a lot more acid than the boys of Windsor for the Derby). Reverby and beautiful, solemn and heartaching, *Giving up the Ghost* is innovative and tragic. A saga from cover to cover, its trance-like qualities refuse to be captured as labels or compared to influences or other acts. With a lo-fi bedroom approach to recording, this band has an original quality that would be lost if they had recorded in a more "traditional" means. Being a newbie to the world of Windsor for the Derby, I wonder if their earlier recorded material compares as highly to the newest full length, or if time shaped them into what they are today. Either way, the duo of Jason McNeely and Dan Matz has succeeded in creating an extremely professional record. (MB)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 West 2nd St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.secretlycanadian.com

You Will Die – S/T, CD

Seriously, guys, *Evil Dead* samples are played. I've always said that technical hardcore type bands would be better off dropping the interchangeable ape grunt vocalists and just going instrumental. Finally, a band wised up: You Will Die doesn't need vocals, and they ain't got none. They've just got good riffs strung together in interesting ways. Not exactly "tech"—there's no showoff time signature fuckery or ostentatious shredding—there are parts that bring to mind the instrumental works of Metallica, Black Flag, and mostly forgotten SST instrumental band Blind Idiot God, all wrapped in a modern hardcore package. Rocking out to the first song while dreading the moment when the vocals would come in, only to discover that they weren't coming, was the pleasant surprise of the issue. (AB)

Hawthorne Street Records, PO Box 805353, Chicago IL 60680, www.hawthornestreetrecords.com

Yuppie Pricks – Stock Market, 7"

Ready for 7" math? Two studio tracks + two live tracks + two covers + two originals = four tracks that make an actual 7" worth buying. The Yuppie Pricks have a lead singer that may as well be Jello Biafra, or is it? The Chumps cover, "Fuck you I'm Rich," is classic punk without any reservations. While on the live side we get Paul Motard of the Motards joining the Yuppie Pricks for a great version of the Motards' "Paycheck." I loved the Motards, and the Yuppie Pricks are growing on me. In fact, this single made me pull out their LP and listen to it again and I have decided that it is an actual keeper. At first I was put off by the ripoff of the Dead Kennedys sound and lyrics, but have now decided that this throwback to an era of my youth is what make the Yuppie Pricks a great listen. This is a refreshing change of pace from other current releases. Please, new bands, don't try this. There is not enough room for you, and the Yuppie Pricks are doing it very well. In fact, they're on Alternative Tentacles, so you aren't going to do this shtick any better. (EA)

Chicken Ranch Records, www.chickenranchrecords.com

V/A – Generations, CD

Revelation takes a stab at putting together another classic hardcore compilation a la *The Way It Is Together*. It doesn't stand up to the classics, but did anyone really expect it to? Overall, it's a pretty good sampling of hardcore that's going on around the US (two Canadian bands, too) right now. The comp opens and closes with a trifecta of quality bands. Go It Alone starts it off with a modern hardcore sounding song, Lights Out pulls out a quality rager next, and Lion of Judah then puts forth a song better than anything on their recent EP. The midsection highlights are Iron Boots' Warzone-esque songs, Robot Whales coming out Grav-ity Records styled, Sinking Ships reminding me of Swiz and Righteous Jams just being Righteous Jams. The last three bands practically make this comp worth it for them alone. Mind Eraser? More like "Mind Blower." They play two power violence songs straight out of No Comment and Crossed Out land. There's a power violence resurgence happening and Mind Eraser's right at the top. Fucked Up is next with another classic. Has this band written a bad song? All signs point to "no." They give you what is expected of them, garage-y hardcore from a bunch of record collector geeks. Mental closes it with the first recording of theirs I've liked. Their youth crew sound has pulled a little Quicksand into the mix and it works; their song is a nonstop rocker. If you can manage to wade through the mediocre songs you will find some great hardcore on this comp. (DA)

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615, www.revelationrecords.com

V/A – Take Penicillin Now, CD

The first compilation offering from G7 is both widely varied and overtly politically oriented, which the packaging (modeled after the anonymous "take penicillin now" letter to Senator Tom Daschle a few years back) emulates. As one might expect to find on a compilation, this disc offers up a smattering of largely unknown and highly diverse acts that aim to pique your interest in the bands themselves, as well as in the issues they preach. Warsawpack comes off as the second coming of Rage Against the Machine, with the lead half rhyming about multinational corporations and living standards while returning to a chorus of "ya mothafuckas, we'll drop ya!" Not all tracks are quite so counterintuitive, however, as from there, Clann Zú's "An báid Dubh" calms everything down with soft, deep vocals and a simple, melodic guitar line, while later on Just Between Friends offers up "I Spy," a lo-fi screamer standout. The obvious highlight, though, is a previously unreleased track from veterans Propagandhi, "Name and Address Withheld," and The (International) Noise Conspiracy cleans up well with "Ever Felt Cheated?" In the end, it's a grab bag of sorts when moving from one track to the next, with politics being the common element throughout—so if that particular bend isn't your thing, maybe this isn't the best place to start with G7. Otherwise, raise your fist and listen away. (SBM)

G7 Welcoming Committee Records
www.g7welcomingcommittee.com



REVIEWED THIS MONTH @ PUNKPLANET.COM/REVIEWS.HTML

ARE Weapons - Free in the Streets, CD

A-Sides, the - Hello, Hello, CD

A Wilhelm Scream - Ruiner, CD

An Angle - We Can Breathe Under Alcohol, CD

Action Is, the - Forget the Alibi, CD

Adios - Situations, CDEP

After the Fight - Basura Solamente, CD

Against all Authority / Common Rider - Split, CD

Anal Government Hypocrisy (with Spikes) - We Must

Form Gangs and Stop Them!, CD

Angel Sluts, the - Hot Teen Action, 7"

Atomic Blitxwax, the - 3, CD

Azzara, Sarah / Sylvan Screen - S/T, CDEP

Bane - The Note, CD

Bangkok Five, the - Ten the Hard Way, CD

Baroness - Second, CDEP

Beaumont Hamel / I Spoke - Split, 7"

Bent Left - Skeletons in Your Closet, CD

Big Nurse - American Waste, 12"

Bitter Tears, the - The Grinning Corpse That Went to Town

Blastoffs, the - Crash and Burn with the Blastoffs, CD

Blastoffs, the - Sin to Win, CD

Blitzen Trapper - Field Rexx, CD

Blitzkriegbliss - Every Day is Marked, CD

Bloodiest Night of my Life, the - An Agony in Eight Fits, CD

Blue Monday - Rewritten, CD

Blusom - The Metropolitan, CD

Boyracer - Insults and Insights, CD

Brain Failure - American Dreamer, CD

Broken Heroes - I Told U Once, CD

Brutally Frank - She'll Bleed, 7"

Built Like Alaska - Autumnland, CD

Captain Bringdown and the Buzz Killers - Feel Good Tunes, CDEP

Cat & Dog Dialogue / Red Pony Clock - Split CD

Caudill, Jeff - Here's What You Should Do, CD

Century - S/T, CDEP

Champion - Time Slips Away, CD

Cherry Valence, the - TCv3, CD

Cobra Verde - Copycat Killers, CD

Colony of Watts - Mercenary Position CD

Conflict - There's No Power Without Control, CD

Cool Concern, the - Five Years Apart, CD

Creeps, the - Back to the Bin, CD

Cut City - S/T, CDEP

Dahl, Jeff - Cursed, Poisoned, Condemned . . . , CD

Day of Contempt - The Will to Live, CD

Dead Hearts - S/T, CD

Deadbird - The Head and the Heart, CD

Deadlock - Earth.Revolt, CD

Death in Vegas - Satan's Circus, CD

deFUMP - Makeshift Polaris, CD

Die Young - Survival Instinct, CD

Driven High, the - S/T, CD

Drugs of Faith - Questions, CDEP

Divide the Day - Pretty Girls With Ugly Boys, CD

Divining, the - Reprisal, CD

Dropsonic - Insects With Angel Wings, CD

Dugong - Quick to the City CD

Dumb Haircuts / Ethan, Master of the Hawaiian Ukulele, 7"

E=MC Hammer - Tunist, CDEP

E-ZEE Tiger - S/T, CD

Eerie Von - Bad Dream No. 13, CD

Embrace the End - Counting Hallways to the Left

Estel - My Dreams are Like Rabbits They Built a Tunnel,

Fell Onto the Pavement, and Died, CD

FM Bats - Everybody Out... Shark in the Water, CDEP

Fall of Troy, the - Doppelgänger, CD

Farm Fresh - Time is Running Out, CD

Finale, the - Things cCan Still get Better, CD

Firecracker - So Long Someday, CD

Fite, Tim - Gone Ain't Gone, CD

5¢ Deposit - Focus on the Negative, CD

Fiya - Better Days, CD

Fleas and Lice - Recipes for Catastrophes, CD

Fleas and Lice - Early Years, CD

Fleshtones, the - Beachhead, CD

Foolery, Tom and the Mistakes - Fatter of Mact, CD

Frankenburles, the - Devil's Punchbowl, CD

Freakwater - Thinking of You, CD

Fried Chinese Donalds - Declaration of Dependence, CD

Fugue, the - Mysterious Animals, CDEP

Fury, the - Infinitejest, CD

Fuses - Eastern Cities, CD

Gammits Make War, the / Oroku - Split, 7"

General ElektriKs - Cliquety Kliq, CD

Ghorar Deem Express - S/T, CD

Good, Eli - Bride of the Bull, CD

Good Robot / Bad Robot & This Tape Loop is a Bomb

- Sing for Children / Scare the Children, CD

Gordon B. Isnor - Creatures all Tonight, CD

Grabass Charlesons - Ask Mark Twain, CD

Greater California - Sombre Wurritzer, CD

Guilty Hearts, the - S/T, LP

Hammer Bros - II, 7"

Hard Lessons, the - Gasoline, CD

Hatepinks / Shakin' Nasties - Split, 7"

He Taught me Lies / Rick Gribenas - Genealogies and

Collaborations, 12"

Hockeynight - Keep Guessin', CD

Holograms, the - Night of 1000 Ex-Boyfriends, CD

Holy Mountain, the - Entrails, CD

Hong Kong Six - S/T, CD

Ideal Cleaners - The H is O, CD

Immortal Lee County Killers - These Bones Will Rise to

Love You Again, CD

In Pieces - Lions Write History CD

In-V - Cast Straight, CD

Inquisition - Revolution . . . I Think it's Called Inspiration, CD

Jackson United - Western Ballads, CD

James, Mikki - Guess What . . . , CD

James, Richard and the Special Riders - Jeff Gunn, 7"

Jonbenet, the - The Plot Thickens, CD

Jumpsuit - Regret, CD

K, Kevin - Mr. Bones, CD

K, Kevin and the Real Kool Kats - Perfect Sin, CD

KBH - Blood Money, CD

Kanda - All the Good Meetings are Taken, CD

Kid Icarus - The Metal West, CD

Kids Near Water / America is Waiting / Coalfield,

the - Split, CD

Kissing - Me and Otto, CD

Legendary Hucklebuds, the - Rattle all Night Long

and Shake You!, CD

Life and Times, the - Suburban Hymns, CD

Liggloss, Veronica & the Evil Eyes - The Witch's

Dagger CD

Losers Beat Winners - S/T, CD

Makeshift3 - Fluorescent Black, CD

Mark, Carolyn - Just Married: an Album of Duets, CD

Mass, the - Perfect Picture of Wisdom and Boldness, CD

Memory, the - Your Blood, My Hands . . . Let's Make

it a Date, CDEP

Mercuryswitch - Time to Shine, CD

Mexican Blackbirds, the - Fear of Texas, 12"

Monroes, the - Inferno, 7"

Motorpsychos - Piston Whipped, CD

Mutts, the - Life in Dirt, CD

My Country of Illusion - American Dreamlife, CD

Neon Maniacs - Transplant Baby, 7"

New Black - Time Attack, CD

New Estate - Considering... , CD

New Flesh, the - Filth & Degradation, Volume One, CD

New York Rifles - Faraway Faster, CD

Nourallah, Salim - Beautiful Noise, CD

November Trials - S/T, CDEP

Omens, the - Destroy the ESP, CD

On our Own / Under one Flag / Your Mistake - Split, CD

One Point Three - Midwestern Apathy, CD

One way Down / Youth Gone Mad - Split, 7"

Orange Park - Songs From the Unknown, CD

Oranges Band, the - The World and Everything in It, CD

Pama International - Float Like a Butterfly, CD

Past Mistakes - The Purgatory LP, CD

Peanut Butter Jones - Peanut Butter Jones and the

Mystery Piano, CD

Phenoms, the - Home Brain Surgery Kit, CD

Piglet - Lava Land, CDEP

Pope, the - Society of Friends, CD

Princess - S/T, CD

Rat Byte - S/T, 7"

Ratzlow, the - Silly Love Songs, CD

Rebel, the - Kit, CD

Recent Photo - The Monster Within, CD

Recurse - Weakening the Structure, CD

Red Forty - Discography, CD

Red Rose Girls, the - The Red Rose Girls, CD

Remainder Four - On With the Experiment, CD

Ries, Rachel - For You Only, CD

Rumbleseat - Rumbleseat is Dead, CD

Saw Wheel - The Next Train, CD

Scarred, the / Void Control - Split, 7"

Sex Slaves - Bite Your Tongue, CD

Shattered Faith - Bootleg, CD

She Likes Todd - The 600 Club, CD

Selten-Ubel - S/T, 12"

Sicks Deep - The Blackacre Sessions CDEP

Since the Day - El Mensajero No Es Importante CD

Sloppy Meateaters - Conditioned by the Laugh

Track, CD

So I'll - Dear Kathy, CD

Some Girls - The DNA Will Have its Say, CD

Somerset - Pandora, CD

Sonnets, the - Mystery Girl, CD

Spitting Cobras - Idle / Tickin', 7"

Stiffed - Burned Again, CD

Stilyagi - You Are a Fucking Liar, 7"

Street Brats - You'll Never Walk Alone, 7"

Stromba - Tales From the Sitting Room, CD

Sugar & the Raw - Translucent, CD

Suzukiton - Service Repair Handbook, CD

Towers of London - On a Noose, CDEP

T. Raumschmiere - Blitzkreig Pop, CD

Tah-Dahs, the - Le Fun, CD

Thanksgiving - The Ghost and the Eyes with Trees in

the Ground Outside the Window, CD

Theta - Tone Poems for Sad Times, CDEP

Towers Open Fire - S/T, CD

Turbo AC's, the - Avenue X, CD

Twentyinburial - How Much Will We Laugh and

Smile?, CD

Valient Thor - Total Universe Man, CD

Valley, the - S/T, CD

Vera Deirdre - Before Morning Arrived, CD

Vincent, Sonny - Soul Mates . . . CD

Weekend Warriors - S/T, CD

Yellow Belts, the - S/T, CDEP

Yesterday's Ring - Back from El Rancho, 12"

V/A - Broken Promise Two, CDEP

V/A - The Enlightened Family: A Collection of Lost

Songs, CD

V/A - To Live and die in Tampa Bay, CD

V/A - Mister Records Comp 3: The Max Lord Sessions, CD

VA - Punx Unite, Leaders of Today, CD

V/A - Until the Shaking Stops: A Salute to Jawbox, CD

V/A - Young Lions, CD

ZINES



Choose Your Own Adventure: Lust and Cashmere

The pull of a *Choose Your Own Adventure* novel isn't just navigating your way through the debacle ahead; it is also knowing that you could be at the beginning of the story but be reading a page at the end of the book. Sure, you could end up asphyxiating in a rocket or well—some conclusion will be illuminated—but the ending never seems to be extremely happy, or very controversial, gender-specific or titillating.

The zine/art book *Lust and Cashmere* is a remarkable *Choose Your Own Adventure* fiasco. A one-person edited effort (I assume) with a few illustrations, it is even more remarkable in the fact that, well, it's mostly about fucking sweaters. Not only that, but there are appearances from a samurai spirit, a sensei, and other things typically out of place in the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series. It is also scattered with footnotes, geometrical theorems, scenes of poking one's penis off with knitting needles (you have a penis in the story, whether or not you have one in reality), and other delicacies.

Like some sort of alternative reality-traveler, I went over and over, back to the same starting point in *Lust and Cashmere*, to suss if the pagination was legit. See, I always wondered how they set up the pagination in these types of books. The authors must have a variety of people checking the story over and over, like I did, to make sure it doesn't cliff-hang or dead end where it's not supposed to. With *Lust and Cashmere*, I did end up occasionally on the same page with varying story lines or choices, but it seems that this was intentional. Laziness or artiness? I'm not sure. But after navigating my way through this zine, I will say this: take THAT chaos theory! Butterfly effect, my ass! Sometimes everything ends up the same no matter what choices you make. My favorite ending to this zine is probably the scariest thing I've ever seen in any real *Choose Your Own Adventure* (and isn't that what life is, a *Choose Your Own Adventure*, anyway?!): "The duration of ten thousand years is meaningless and everything is awake but sleeping. THE END." (LM)

Alistair Simms, Green Lantern Press. No contact information given.

AK Inc. #16

The "AK" stands for Alaska, and the bulk of this zine's content is comprised of record, film, and show reviews. A poem imagining the Dead Kennedys manned by actual dead Kennedys (JFK, RFK, and JFK Jr.), instead of Jello and company, is a welcome respite from the tedium of endless reviews. (AC)

\$1 or trade, PO Box 244235, Anchorage, AK 99524, www.akink.org

Arthur #18

I knew this would be a good issue with Paul Pope's art gracing the cover. It's also nice to know that a newsprint publication of such variety is available nationwide. Articles on the problems of serial monogamy and a skin cancer victim's travels to Peru are excellent, and the music review section is a hoot. (CS)

Free, www.arthurmag.com

The Banana King #2

It's high time someone took to compiling some of Chicago's best under-the-radar, up-and-coming writers into one fine binding. The second issue of the *Banana King* blooms with captivating and emotive short stories, reflections, and dialogues. Local screen king Jay Ryan blesses the covers with his distinctive styling, providing a beautiful aesthetic backdrop for the brilliant cast of wordplayers. I'm anxiously awaiting another issue. (BM)

Donations, www.thebananaking.org

Blasphemy Pages #2 Presents: The Battle of Spokane

In what is one of the most interesting zines I've seen in awhile, Matt relates the more fascinating parts of the history of Spokane, WA through essays and illustrations. He seamlessly intersects the personal with the

historical, integrating stories of his own upbringing in Spokane with events from the city's timeline. In the end, he comes up battling for ways to reconcile his best memories with the desire to get the hell out of the place, and that's something I could really relate to. Highly recommended. (CS)

\$2 or trade, Matt Runkle, 3207 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609

Blurt #3

Issue #3 of *Blurt* consists of jagged road stories and sketched illustrations centered around monumental cross-country friends. Lew's fragmented, streaming style provides for some interesting moments, but overall I'd like to see a bit more structure and direction. (BM)

\$1, Lew Houston 135 Wapwallopen Rd. Nescopek, PA, www.microcosmpublishing.com

Boredom #1

Ben doesn't seem too bored to me. His silly "little mini zine thingy" as he calls it, presents his amateur Shrigley-ish chicken scratches of dinosaurs eating ham, snaggle-toothed teddy bears, and a compass missing east. Oh yeah, and a smiling cat-giraffe, exclaiming "Hit the deck!" Ridiculous and giggly! (LM)

Free, *Boredom Art*, 701 Pine St., Athens, WI 54411

Boxcutter #3: Sum 03

Boxcutter is off to a flying start with fantastic layout and an amazing piece about engaging yourself in both mainstream and underground culture ("If the dance floor can't be a temporary autonomous zone...then how the fuck can we claim...a work place[?]"). But then it snoozes into lala poetryland and rantville. (LM)

\$1, *Boxcutter* c/o Tomas, 1636 Fairview St., Berkeley, CA 94703, boxcutterzine@riseup.net

Brains #2

Here's the continuing not-so-subtle class war saga of punks vs. zombies, the latter being the capitalists, yuppies, preppies, cops, posers and so forth. That is, except for the subversive vegetarian zombie. Not as silly as *Wild Zero* but definitely not the most original social commentary of the century. (LM)

[No price given] Mishap Publishing, Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405, brainszine@yahoo.com

Broken Records

Broken Records is the person you see on the street who makes you turn the other way, mostly because he/she bores you with stories of people and places only significant to him/her. In agonizing detail. For a long period of time. A "memoir of a record store clerk," *Broken Records* is brimming with nitpicky, over-indulgent anecdotes (who said what to whom, lengthy descriptions of co-workers, etc.). However, it does come with a mix CD. Unfortunately, taste in music cannot rectify such pointlessness. (AJA)

\$2, Jessica, 46 Kirkwood Dr. Buffalo, NY 14224, xsorickdeath@graffiti.net

Charged Hair, Distorted Riffs #3: Apr 05

CHDR is a good lookin', typewritten, cut'n'paste, "the problem with the scene is..." situation, with a definite crusty-punk-and-proud-of-it, squatting anarchist vibe. There are even columns from people with excellent squatter anarchist names like "Robssessive" and "Squamish." Not too bad. But does anybody outside of Vancouver find this relevant? (LM)

\$2 or a mix tape. Jeff, PO Box 21530, 1424 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 5G2, distortvancouver@hotmail.com

Citizine #9: Punk Rock Commentary

While I enjoy the content of this zine (particularly the interview with Tommy Erdelyi last issue), it would really benefit from a new graphic designer doing the layouts and an editor paring down the interviews. Readers don't want to sift through filler or feel a pause in conversation. Generally, I read *Citizine* cover to cover but not without cringing a few times. This issue contains a solid interview with Steve Albini (with only a few dull moments), but the Billy Zoom interview is heart-wrenchingly painful. Billy is obviously annoyed with the interviewer and explains this is why he doesn't do interviews. For god's sakes, edit! (JB)

\$4, 2513 W 4th St. Los Angeles, CA 90057

Dreams from Hades

B. Alan Ellis writes because, in his own words, "it's supposedly a much more productive pastime than killing people." Which is, of course, a good thing. The stories herein reflect such an outlook: the hapless Jack, a grisly babysitting gig, and a dinner date gone wrong, among others. (CS)

[No price given], House of Vlad Productions, 55 Brett Lane, Temple, GA 30179, houseofvlad@hotmail.com

Escaping Elsewhere #5

Containing fiction, poetry, and a few nonfiction items, *Escaping Elsewhere* is an innocuous read—the type of stuff you could adapt for dramatic performance if you were on say, a high school speech team. Or hallucinogenic drugs. Stand out piece: "Marital Bliss" by Brian W. Keen. (LM)

\$5, PO Box 936, Savage, MD 20763, www.escaping-elsewhere.com

The Fidalgo Island's Beautiful #12

That this is a singular effort is quite impressive. Jimi has a great interview style as well as a keen eye for layout and structure. He talks with musician and artist Genevieve Castree, indie label owner Bret Lunsford, and artist Phil Everum. Jimi's own full-page, collage illustrations are great too. (CS)

\$7.50, Jimi Sharp, 3528 Fishtap Loop NE, Olympia, WA 98506, theifbzine@yahoo.com

The Fidalgo Island's Beautiful #13

Jimi Sharp outlived both of his parents to dedicate this issue documenting NW music, art, and politics to them. His interviews with K Records artists Calvin

About our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. The zines to the left on the opening page—the ones with the magazine cover reproduced—are designated as “lead” reviews by the reviewer. That means it’s a zine that really stands out for them this time around. But it certainly doesn’t mean that the many other zines reviewed aren’t good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn’t like your zine, it’s just one person’s opinion, so don’t freak out. We’re sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

This issue’s reviewers: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Joe Biel (JB), Ari Charney (AC), Vincent Chung (VC), Lisa Groshong (LG), Liz Mason (LM), Brian Moss (BM), Claire Sewell (CS) Edited by Laura Pearson

Johnson and Phil Elverum are more like conversations and seem to lack direction or excitement. Jimi seems to know a lot about the bands though, so the question occurs to me, “why the focus on interviewing bands?” These are interesting people but are perhaps better suited to musical expression. Highlights of this zine include cute comics throughout, a collage, photos, and other assorted art and humor. (JB)
\$7.50, Jimi Sharp, 3528 Fishtrap Loop NE, Olympia, WA 98506, thefibzine@yahoo.com

The Hated

This handwritten zine is apparently the creative product of several different prisoners. One thoughtful piece ruminates on the backstory of a 1991 receipt for artichokes, lamb chops, and donuts found tucked into a prisoner’s copy of *Plato’s Republic*. Another piece delves into the writer’s personal fetish for all things scatological. (AC)

[No price given], 109 Arnold Avenue, Cranston, RI 02905

Heartcheck

Heartcheck is a fundraiser for political prisoners Jeff Luers and Rob Thaxton, the former sentenced to approximately 22 years for setting fire to three SUVs in an action against global warming, and the latter serving seven years for throwing a rock at a police officer during a public protest. The majority of Heartcheck is written by Luers, covering topics important to radical/anarchistic causes. His writing is agitated, both with the capitalist system and the complacency of those on the left, and fearless in what it desires to achieve. Luers is concerned mainly with environmental issues, capitalism’s destruction of the environment, and its exploitation of less-wealthy countries. His aim is mobilizing his readers, but his message can be disengaging. (AJA)
\$7, PO Box 3, Eugene, OR 97440, www.freefreenow.org

Immigrant Zine #2

Though 12 pages of this zine are written entirely in Greek, the vast majority of its content is in English. The reviews section covers bands from all over the world, but includes a special section devoted specifically to Greece. A gritty comic depicting a New York punk’s encounter with a transit cop is the entertaining focal point for this issue. (AC)

Free with postage, 118 Bright St., Jersey City, NJ 07302, immigrant_zine@yahoo.com

Impact Press #57

Another segment of this long-running socio-political magazine offers articles on US government dysfunction, the military’s homophobia, and the nation’s quick descent into McCarthyism. Consistently sensationalistic and biased, the writing is nonetheless well-researched and inspired. (VC)

\$3 to Impact Press, PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817, www.impactpress.com

Kung Fu Grip! #1

Kung Fu Grip is an homage to late-seventies pop culture, filled with reminiscences of celebrities, toys, TV shows, and, mainly, kung fu. With comics on the subject to archived news stories to an interview with Chicago kung fu man, Count Dante, the subject matter becomes pretty tiring. However, when Paco stops fanaticizing and relates stories from his childhood—of losing friends to violence and his old neighborhood—Kung Fu Grip turns from pulp fanfare into something much weightier and significant. (AJA)

\$3, Paco Taylor, 250 North Arcadia #1320, Tucson, AZ 85711, www.metropolmedia.com

L.A. Scene Reporter #17

This four-page photocopied zine is exactly what it says. And does a fine job of it. Supplemented with random snippets from tabloid papers and well-chosen clipart, this is a useful resource for L.A.-dwellers needing a concise guide to the local punk and ska goings-on. (LG)
\$1 or three stamps, Nick G., 312 W. 8th St., Los Angeles CA 90014; gravyzine@hotmail.com

Last Hours #10

Formerly known as Rancid News, Last Hours is 114 pages of interviews (some of them way too long) and articles chronicling the British scene. The informative series on prisons is the best I’ve seen, though the magazine’s horizontally-oriented design impedes readability. As a bonus, I learned some great new insults, like “fuckwits.” (LG)
£1.50, Last Hours, PO Box 382, 456-458 The Strand, London WC2R 0DZ; www.lasthours.org.uk

Layers #1

This issue contains an interview with Evan Seinfeld (Biohazard) and pornstar Tera Patrick who talk about owning their video label, HIV, exploitation of women, contracts, business, and quality in porn. I wish there was more of a radical bent here, but it’s interesting nonetheless. (JB)

\$1, Brian Bush, 15140 Evergreen Dr. Apt 3D, Orland Park, IL 60462

Left Back #5

A collection of poetry and prose addressing simple and common subjects: fear, social change, boredom, and revolution. The content doesn’t have a lot of development, and I feel compelled to write responses to several of them, but maybe that’s the point. (JB)

\$1, 109 Arnold Cranston, RI 02905

Les Carnets de Rastapopoulos #5

Apparently instigated by time in the pokie, the author explores notions of “freedom”: from college students’ dreams of sovereignty to floating republics to a lady NASCAR driver. I appreciate the spirit motivating this zine but would rather read original material than a bunch of stuff thinly rewritten from the internet. (LG)

[No price given], 101-4906 Main, Vancouver, BC Canada V5W2R3

Let’s Just Pretend #3

If you are going to create a fanzine full of opinions, it might seem more convincing if every decision wasn’t preceded by a disclaimer or other fear of judgment. Interview the bands you want and let the zine speak for itself. Keep the nice graphics though! (JB)

\$3, 59 Canning Rd., Croydon Surrey, UK CR0 6QF

Loudmouth #9

Having proven itself in past issues to be a high-quality zine of enviable intelligence, this issue is perhaps the best yet. Dedicated to fashion, issue #9 simultaneously critiques and revels in all that word can mean. The standout piece is an interview with Judith “Jack” Halberstam. Other articles expose the hypocrisy of the American Apparel brand and investigate the historical genderfuck aspects of women in the Mexican Revolution. The real beauty of this issue, though, lies in the fact that each person’s point of view is given space to stand on its own. Loudmouth has real substance, and it’s obvious that its creators work hard to make each issue better than the last. (CS)

Free, www.calstatela.edu/usu/loudmouth

Loudmouth #10

Loudmouth is the California State University at Los Angeles’ women’s resource publication. Covering a wide array of issues including the arts, feminist thought, local and global political and social issues, and domestic relations, the scope of the print is vast and thorough. For women or men interested in the current happenings of the progressive, educated and intellectual female in relation to culture, society and activism, Loudmouth supplies plenty of thoughtful insight. (BM)

Free, www.calstatela.edu/usu/loudmouth

Meat Market #8: J Church Tour Diaries

Avid J Church fans, and folks who have the traveler’s/touring itch, will be able to relate minimally to David’s fast paced memoirs of his journeys with a seminal punk outfit. The term “diary” must be kept in mind, as the reading is primarily a cut-and-dry summarized recollection of happenings. The comic sections, illustrated with stick figures, provide for some inevitable laughter. This is an easy and lighthearted read ideal for bus and/or train riding. (BM)

[No information given]

The Media Whore Feminist Literature Review

Wow, great stuff! Randi has done an awesome job of bringing together a variety of reviewers to share their point of view on timely feminist books. Whereas other more mainstream magazines are often too succinct, Media Whore succeeds in its ability to reveal more than just a summary. Naming standout reviews seems contrary to the mission of MW, so I will simply say that if

you have any interest at all in feminist literature, then you should get this. (CS)

\$2, Media Whore, 12 B Wolcott Street, Malden, MA 02148, www.mediawhorezine.com

Mishap #19

This motley zine assembles various rants about national politics and hometown politics, thoughts about those who develop geeky obsessions, an accounting of the writer’s first death metal show, and remembrances of punk rock skaterdom. Rounding out this issue is an extensive commentary on anarchism. (AC)

\$3 or trade, P.O. Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405

Modern Arizona #8

In this issue of Modern Arizona, Joe Unseen talks about skydiving, smuggling drugs from Amsterdam and eating chitlins in Harlem. The main articles themselves are on the dull side, but smaller features like “Ask Kevin” (“Why are boogers sticky?”), a credit card application with Unseen’s pseudonym, and the enclosed promotional Modern Arizona movie poster are keepers. (AJA)
\$1, PO Box 494, Brewster, NY 10509, unseen@bestweb.net

Night Jaunts #3

When I first heard about this zine—a collection of stories about walking at night—I was skeptical. How interesting would these stories be? Aren’t “night jaunts” about the experience, not the story? I was wrong. This is priceless. Containing tales of stealing a launch ramp for revenge, getting hit in the face with a brick, my hometown, and our local DIY club, each story is gripping, and I hope this is not just because I know all of the characters involved. (JB)

\$1-2/trade, Ryan, PO Box 5841 Eugene, OR 97405

Oh No! The Robot #6

Just so you know, Chris’s zine used to be called *Chicken Soup for the Soulless*. But have no fear: the content is exactly as remembered. Themed around friends, life, relationships, growing up, and playing shows in Calgary, his stories have a nice metaphoric feel to them that works well. (CS)

\$2, Chris Morin, 829 Main St., Saskatoon SK, S7H 0K2, Canada, www.ohnotherobot.com

Pack Light #4

Pack Light begins with disjointed poetry that changes from the expressive to minimal, detached journal entries. The creative spark of its opening pages unravels into stories of drunkenness and sleeping on floors, told with obvious indifference. (AJA)

\$1, Erin Please, 17536 SE Paradise Dr., Milwaukie, OR 97267

Paper Cut, Vol. 1, #1

Looky! A skater art zine! This positively has to be artwork done by skateboarders. The photos are mostly guys on half pipes, the web addresses are skate-related, and there’s a definite street art feel happening,

ZINES

with clean line art. Could use more ladies, but even still, I want more! (LM)
[No price given], www.luxeriot.com

Peak Oil Track

Somehow a lecture on the current problems of oil production and consumption really is more interesting and entertaining when told in comic form. It helps that Antonio has a good sense of humor and cares about talking about these issues. Definitely one of the better zines I've seen on the subject. (CS)
[No price given], Antonio Roman-Alcala, 68 Arnold Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110, antidogmatist@gmail.com

Picaresque #8

The person behind these wistful, episodic memoirs clearly has writerly pretensions. Though his stories have a somewhat melancholy air, they nevertheless retain a certain charm about them, even if the narrator admits that his most recent narratives lack the excitement of his earlier efforts. (AC)
\$2, 17 Mayes St., Stawell, Victoria, Australia 3380, mooneedampress@hotmail.com

Pocketful of Change #2

In addition to the usual band interviews and record reviews, this zine features short, punchy editorials about current issues, as well as a regular column on the history of anarchism. Every issue includes a compilation CD, which serves as an introduction to some of the bands interviewed within. (AC)
\$3, 1005 N. 36th St., #2, Seattle, WA 98103, www.pocketfulofchange.com

Profane Existence #49

Along with a good amount of interviews, columns and reviews, this issue of *Profane Existence* has Christine Boarts Larson, photographer and publisher of *Slug & Lettuce*, as its "Featured Artist." A large portion of the zine is her photos, mostly of bands, but also of dilapidated New York buildings—squats—of which she explains her fascination. In a smart and interesting interview, Larson discusses putting out *S&L*, photography, her numerous hobbies, and documenting underground punk for 18 years. (AJA)
\$5, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profanexistence.com

The Punk Pagan

Finally, a publication for those of us who want to learn about Joey Ramone, doing time, casting spells, and how to cast spells while doing time. I'd like to see this imprisoned author release a recorded-over-the-phone hip-hop album. That'd make for a mind-blowing listen! (BM)
[No price given], PO Box 282, Manville, RI

Rants

Rants is a one-off collection of Picaresque creator Brendan's various opinion-driven diatribes. While Picaresque is a series of bittersweet memoirs, *Rants* has an abundance of attitude, as evidenced in selections as diverse as an article explaining the declaration that Jerry Lee Lewis is "punk as fuck" to an exhortation of straightedge scenester scolds. (AC)
[No price given], 17 Mayes St., Stawell, Victoria, Australia 3380, mooneedampress@hotmail.com

Razorcake #25

Razorcake has become dependable for quality and quirkiness, both of which can be rarities in the newsprint zine genre. This time there are the usual columns, plus interviews with bands Federation-X and Hot Snakes, as well as a good feature on the DIY Boston music scene. (CS)
\$4, PO Box 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042, www.razorcake.com

Red Milk

This issue of *Red Milk* is made up of some bizarre philosophical accounts and theologies involving neo-Christianity, activism, and Hunter S. Thompson. Ann is a gifted and intelligent pen-bearer, but making sense of the idealisms of Zombie Jesus proved to be somewhat of a difficult process. Indulge... if you dare. (BM)
Free, radiantnow@hotmail.com

SaltLakeUnderGround #196

This Salt Lake City-based magazine caters primarily to its local scene, though it still boasts plenty of inventive features to interest outsiders: profiles of local belly dancers, a punk rock cabbie column, and a series of genre-specific record review columns covering metal, house, glam, and industrial. (AC)
Free, 351 Pierpont Ave., Ste. 4B, Salt Lake City, UT 84101, www.slugmag.com

Schism: New York Hardcore Fanzine

As someone who is obsessed with punk history (even the cringe-inducing or embarrassing parts), I was excited to receive this zine. I've never been too entrenched in the male-dominated, straightedge thug style of hardcore, but I am familiar with all of the bands covered here: Warzone, Slapshot, Agnostic Front, Bold, Dag Nasty, Gorilla Biscuits, etc. The reviews and interviews are so single tracked and simplified that it's hilarious! My favorite moment is the interview with white pride band Youth Defense League where each answer contradicts the last, and the interviewers walk circles around the band. Also enjoyable is Porcell's interview of Brian Baker, in which it comes up that Dag Nasty is not a straightedge band and are in fact quite profit driven, which runs quite counter to what the rest of the bands talk about in *Schism*. The ongoing rivalry between *Schism* and *Maximum Rock and Roll* is entertaining, as is the subtle rivalry between bands from NY and those from Connecticut. Overall, the book sees a bit overpriced, though, with deceptively thick pages. While I do respect the attention being paid to punk history, I can't help but feel that much of it is a glorified ad for B9 products. (JB)
\$13.95, 35 Congress St. Salem, MA 01970, www.b9press.com

Skyscraper #19

Skyscraper follows a simple formula: concise profiles, solid reviews, and tons of ad padding. Its sheer volume demands that sort of streamlining, and the established institution of the indie rock mini-industry only adds to that demand. Therefore, *Skyscraper* always feels impersonal, like a machine made to churn out information. However, this allows less room for bullshit. Sticking to the basics, *Skyscraper* is of the most resourceful indie rock magazines around today. (VC)
\$5 to *Skyscraper Magazine*, PO Box 4432, Boulder, CO 80306, www.skyscrapermagazine.com

Slug and Lettuce #83

A DIY mainstay containing pretty photos of punk bands, thoughtful columns, a comic by Fly, and Chris's classic introduction where we hear about measuring time through attending shows. The consistency here is shocking, but where are the classifieds? (JB)
60 cents, PO Box 26632 Richmond, VA 23261-6632

Slug & Lettuce #84

Stuffed with numerous columns and an extensive zine and record reviews section, this venerable punk newsletter contains so much content that readers may require a

magnifying glass to render the microscopic font legible. The prose comic "Dog Day" is an interesting serial chronicling the struggles of Lower East Side squatters. (AC)
Free with stamps, P.O. Box 26632, Richmond, VA 23261-6632

Slug, Vol. 16, #200

Along with the usual reviews, interviews, and rants about people who conform or don't go to shows, this 200th issue of *Slug* provides a fairly interesting look at the counterculture scene in Salt Lake City. (LG)
Free, 351 W. Pierpont Ave. Ste. 4B, Salt Lake City, UT 84101, www.slugmag.com

Solitary Existence (sic) #3

While this prison zine contains glimmers of true emotion and insight, more often it reads like a note intercepted between two barely-literate junior high kids. It would be worthwhile with more honesty and less clichéd rants. Note to author: you being in prison doesn't automatically make everybody else an asshole. (LG)
\$6 or 16 stamps; Travis (SK8) Harramen c/o Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Avenue, Cranston RI 0290, http://fanorama.tk

States of White and Green

Editor Mairead Case has collected the drawings and thoughts of kids from the South Bend Juvenile Justice Center. She chose not to edit their words—an important decision in this case, because it allows the kids and the reader a chance to see what's really going on. An intriguing read. (CS)
[No price given], Mairead Case, 10055 Maydenbauer Way Se. #4, Bellevue, WA 98004

Thoughts of My Liberation

I can't help but imagine the author stepping up to the courtyard soapbox and spewing for 15 minutes until he passes out from lack of oxygen. Frederick, take a breath, dude! This pamphlet is 10 pages of ranting about his Native American roots, environmentalism, anarchy's essence, rebellion, and revolting against the status quo. Its incoherence tests and fails my endurance, rendering me complacent through alienation. (VC)
No price, but send stamps to Frederick Fisher #10447-041, PO Box 1000, Lewisburg, PA 17837, trontipwarrior@yahoo.com

Vegas Haunts the Lonely

As a short story theme zine this works very well, capturing the "spirit" of Las Vegas while also revealing a bit of its surlly side. All of the stories are very conversational and detail oriented, as well as carefully considered (which often escapes other writers in the genre). (CS)
\$5, Chris Haraway, 5909 Laredo St., Las Vegas, NV 89146, mesh138@hotmail.com

Verbicide #14

This interesting combination of literature and music looks better with every issue. The design in issue #14 is particularly top notch. Featuring interviews with the likes of Autolux, Sleater-Kinney, and American Elf, it also offers up fiction by Christopher Staley, Thomas Matera, Vladik Cervantes, and Johnny Ostentatious. Poetry, comics, and reviews round out the issue. (VC)
\$3.95 to Verbicide, www.scissorpress.com

The Vets Gazette #2

I can't fathom how awful it is for the thousands of soldiers who return from Iraq scarred, disillusioned, and then expected to reacquaint into society. Created as a handbook for veterans, this zine compiles reproductions of veteran's literature, information on navigating the post-war bureaucracy, and anti-war articles. It's appar-

ent that the editor is a veteran himself, so it reeks of personal frustration, pride in his servitude, and the watchful, paternal eyes on his cohorts exiting service. (VC)
No price, but send at least \$1 for postage to Bill Price, PO Box 7001, Atascadero, CA 93423

West Star Land

Apparently, this kiwi traveling in the US had the specific goal of seeing more of my country than I ever have. Full of references to Americana like "The Governor," the Chelsea Hotel, and Memphis lingo such as: "He dawg, done did it!," it's refreshing and nutritious overview from a foreigner's perspective. (LM)
[No price given] Kerry Ann Lee, PO Box 14562 Kibbirnie, Wellington 6003 New Zealand, hmsb@bigfoot.com

Wonka Vision #28

Apparently, the saturation of potency that is often synonymous with rags to riches, Xerox-to-full-color-glossy successes isn't a stereotype that Philadelphia's *Wonka Vision* plans on adhering to. The now eight year-old publication is upping their distro to various corporate chains and will most likely become a commonplace item on the coffee tables of young, music-savvy world-widers. Unlike some of their high volume peers, *Wonka Vision's* staff is well versed in their design and wording abilities and dare to venture beyond music into politics, progressive thinking, and the arts. Issue #28 features an in-depth look into the current state of metal, a gorgeous photo essay on abandoned medical and industrial facilities, the four worst jobs in Philadelphia, and much more. If I happen to have the misfortune of ending up lost in the Borders music mag aisle with a few bucks to spare, *Wonka Vision* will be my read of choice. (BM)
\$2.95 US, \$4.95 Canada, PO Box 63680 Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.wonkavisionmagazine.com

Wonka Vision #29

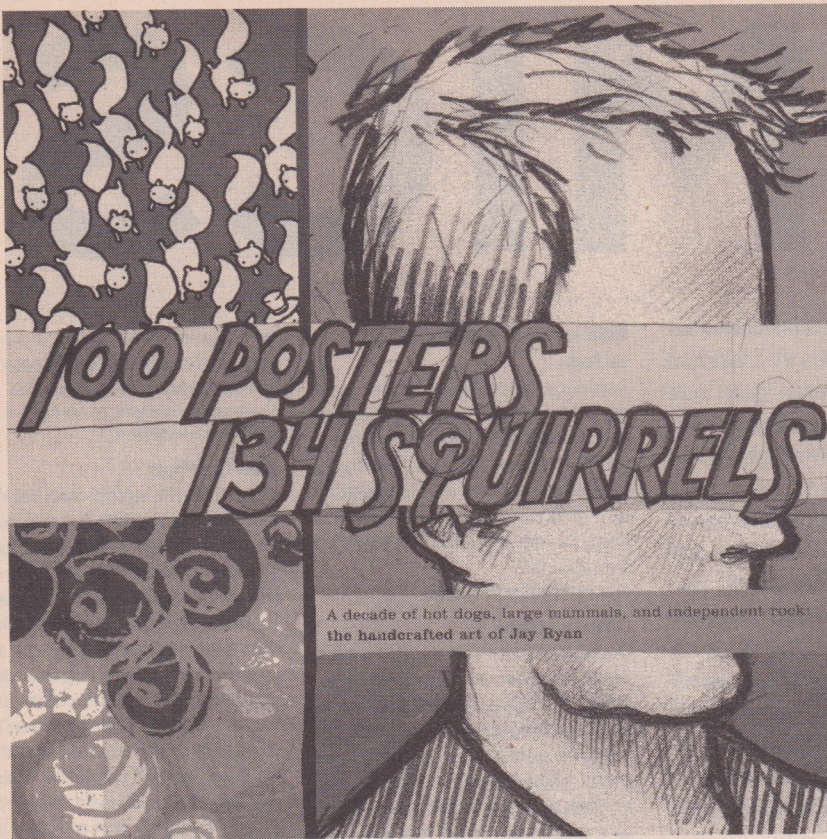
This is *Wonka Vision's* "Do It Yourself" issue, complete with tips on starting a business, getting a loan, and booking venues. And who else to do an interview on the subject matter with than Ian McKaye? (His phone must be ringing ten times a day!) Meatier than the previous issue, #29 also includes interviews with Alkaline Trio and Blake Schwarzenbach, articles on Darfur and the Live 8 concert, and Tim Kinsella as guest record reviewer. Ahh, Darfur and Alkaline Trio...like corn and potatoes. (AJA)
\$2.95, PO Box 63680, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.wonkavisionmagazine.com

World in Trouble

This collection of small books compiles illustrations from a diverse array of artists. These are pocket-sized doses of demented and silly subversion, drawing muses from pop culture, current events, and sheer boredom. (VC)
\$1 + stamp to World in Trouble, PO Box 14007, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Youth Point of View, Vol. 1, #3

An impressive effort out of south LA, this publication provides an outlet for the kids in this area to talk about real problems facing their community. This issue is dedicated to crime and police brutality: an analysis of the events surrounding the recent death of 13-year old Devin Brown is the main feature, followed by an article addressing changes that kids feel need to be made in the LAPD. There is also a dialogue between the YPOV and police officers, which offers a rare a glimpse into the questions, misunderstandings, and fears of both sides. The YPOV newspaper is a great example of what kids and their mentors can do when they collaborate. (CS)
Free, youinc@pacbell.net



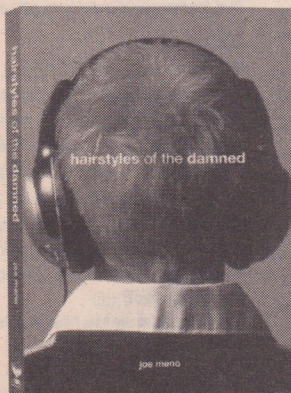
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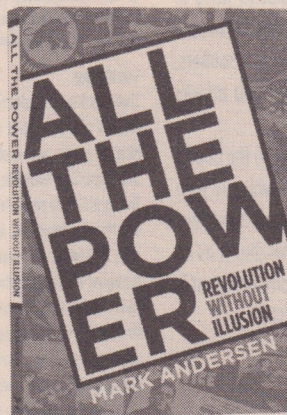
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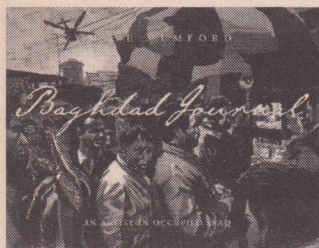
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COMICS



Baghdad Journals: An Artist in Occupied Iraq

Steve Mumford took several trips to Baghdad, riding along with American soldiers on patrol, drinking tea with Iraqi shopkeepers, and drawing sketches of everything he saw. From these, Mumford made the watercolor paintings that make up about half of this book, accompanied by detailed journal entries on his stays in Baghdad and the surrounding area.

Much of Mumford's time is spent with strikingly young soldiers. While their stories evoke sympathy, their predominantly canned responses reveal little that deviates from what the evening news or genre films tell us. The officers of higher rank, however, speak rationally and with eloquence, openly expressing the uneasy burden of their duties. Interestingly, these conversations reveal vast differences in policies, practices, and attitudes from unit to unit and base to base, particularly on the matter of apprehending insurgents. The book's most comfortable and enjoyable passages recount Mumford's time with a genial group of Iraqi artists who pair candid assessments of the state of Baghdad with jokes and girl watching.

Attacks by insurgents are so frequent here that they're monotonous to read—the locals seeming to endure them with all the gravity of a traffic jam. Also rendered mundane through repetition are the raids of households. Mumford generally finds that the soldiers strive to handle these as humanely as possible, but his journal gives the impression that the people of Baghdad are overwhelmingly treated as guilty until proven innocent. As for the soldiers, Mumford shows them constantly facing an uphill struggle; arrests are made and attacks thwarted daily, but there seem to be no illusions of an end in sight.

There's no shortage right now of testimonies from the front lines of Iraq. To the book's credit, Mumford leaves most of the interpretation and opinion to the people who live with America's intervention in Iraq every day. This doesn't deliver any vital new perspectives, but it does present a three-dimensional portrait of a situation that most of us know chiefly as an exhibit in a partisan debate. *Baghdad Journal* didn't change my mind about anything, but it made it apparent that the situation is far more complicated than I'd realized. (CB)

\$34.95, Steve Mumford, Drawn and Quarterly, www.drawnandquarterly.com, ISBN 1-896597-90-4

ADD Comics #1

Dismally adolescent satire dominates this photocopied comic. The drawings are sorta great, but I seriously labored to get through all 16 pages. (CB)

\$3, Riverrats Press, PO Box 9833, Fall River, MA 02720, <http://www.darksideink.com>

Blood Orange #2

This quarterly Fantagraphics anthology can be largely hit or miss, though over time it may prove invaluable as an incubator of upcoming cartooning talent. This particular issue includes contributions from two fairly established cartoonists, Renee French and Archer Prewitt, both of whose works are unfortunately limited to one

page apiece. French's piece is a comedic and typically surreal soft pencil rendering of a house on stilts surrounded by ominous tentacles peeking out from the watery depths below. Swiss cartoonist Helge Reumann's contribution, however, is the highlight of the issue. His wordless panels depict the death of a hapless little imp, whose ghostly spirit—still attached to its earthly form via a spectral umbilical cord—watches helplessly while the forces of nature desecrate its flesh. Cole Johnson's opening story is reminiscent of the nerdy amorous longing found in Adrian Tomine's comics: a diffident hipster type can't decide whether to enjoy an evening alone or suffer the indignities of his crush's sadistic tease. (AC)

\$5.95, Various, Fantagraphics, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115

Bucket and Dog, Book One: Bus Stops, Bocce, and Bows

Sarah Becan's stab at mainstream kids' comics is very cute, and that's not bad. But that's also exactly, entirely, and exclusively what this mini-comic is: cute. Guilty pleasure? Maybe. Great art? No, but kinda nifty. Becan has a gentle mastery of the comic pause and quirky animal expressions, both of which succeed at eliciting the laugh (or "awww"). Definitely good T-shirt material. (JH)

\$3, Sarah Becan, <http://www.bucketanddog.com>

Christina and Charles

Each half of this book is a sort of portrait, containing thoughts and moments from the lives of its two protagonists. At first glance, these curly, sketchy, vibrant colored pencil comics appear childlike, but upon closer reading, they open out into complex inner and interpersonal dialogues that render the young characters surprisingly mature. Speech balloons swoop and overlap as characters talk over each other while picture bubbles from their hands illuminate verbal narration. This book explores mental illness, changing friendships, jazz music, and difficult romance with resonance, brilliance, and beauty. (CD)

\$10, Austin English, Sparkplug Comic Books, PO Box 10952, Portland, OR, 97296-0952, www.sparkplugcomicbooks.com, ISBN 0-9742715-2-7

Coexisting

There's a 3-on-3-basketball tournament coming up, and Andrew and his friend Carl need a third player. Enter Marcus: a nice guy, a strong basketball player, and a rather extreme example of a Christian Fundamentalist. The comic's title refers to Marcus's belief that dinosaurs and humans coexisted, as well as to Andrew's and Marcus's difficulties maintaining a friendship amid mutual disregard for one another's views on life. Although it ends more or less like you expect it to, *Coexisting* tells its straight story through admirably inventive means. The opening scene unfolds with simultaneous point-of-view panels from three different characters. Lengthy dialogue segments are efficiently replaced with instant-messenger screen captures. This excellent comic was awarded a Xeric self-publishing grant in 2004. (CB)

\$2.99, Andrew Drozd, Alternative Comics, <http://www.Andrew-Drozd.com>, ISBN 1-891867-77-6

Deathfist Ninja GKaiser #1

Though crisply drawn, this manga style comic can't overcome its feeble superhero style plot wherein a high school student is sucked into a parallel dimension to assume the persona of the titular hero. (AC)

\$3, Jim Freedan and Jen Brooks, Techno Comics, www.technocomics.com

Evil Eye #12

This issue of *Evil Eye* picks up in the midst of the Reflection in a Glass Scorpion series. Creepy and angular gothic

style artwork accompanies a storyline full of inventive ways to kill off characters (scorpion in the eyeball = pure genius) and increasingly hideous zombies. (LG)

\$3.95, Richard Sala, Fantagraphics, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, www.fantagraphics.com

Humor Can Be Funny

In this collection of his early mini-comics (now in a second edition), *SpongeBob SquarePants* writer Sam Henderson revisits all the conventional kinds of "funny"—bathroom humor! Dumb politicians! The ice cream man!—then adds a parodic "Ha! This is funny because..." twist. The drawings are simple and look like they were sketched by an 8 year-old at the back of a moving vehicle (using only his/her feet), but Henderson's crude style serves to amplify his perfectly executed text. This is a quick read, alternating between longer stories and short, scribbly comics, such as "What If Men Had Periods?" and "Don't Date Musicians," which play upon comedic topics so overused that their very overuse is now amusing. This idea is never clearer than in the lists of "always funny" things scattered throughout the book, e.g. "A toupee caught in a vacuum cleaner is always funny." Indeed, humor itself can be funny! But Henderson's particular brand of it is hilarious. (LP)

\$11.95, Sam Henderson, Alternative Comics, ISBN 1-891867-41-5

It Disappears

Nate Powell's second book, *It Disappears*, reads like a visual meditation. Featuring crisp black-and-white line drawings and a flowing, non-linear storyline, it draws together the narrator's encounters with talking animals on a solitary camping-trip and a conversation with a damaged Vietnam vet who has chosen to withdraw from society. Though sparse, the dialogue is obtuse enough to distract from the drawings, which could easily stand alone and evoke the sense of wonder and mystery that Powell seeks. (LG)

\$7.95, Nate Powell, Soft Skull Press, 71 Bond St., Brooklyn, NY, www.softskull.com, ISBN 1-932360-37-9

The King

The King takes to the stage again in this darkly stirring adventure/mystery by the award-winning Rich Koslowski. Set against the garish backdrop of Vegas, the story follows a washed-up tabloid journalist investigating a masked Elvis impersonator whom scarily loyal fans are convinced is the Elvis. But of course, everyone the reporter interviews is humming a different tune, steadily obscuring the line between fact and fiction. Koslowski is a master at conveying emotion, and although the simple dichromatic blue and grey shading grows slightly tiresome, it does add to the grimness of the tale: the drab marquees of Vegas and the King's "gold" helmet that is never really gold. (LP)

\$19.95, Rich Koslowski, Top Shelf Productions, www.topshelfcomix.com, ISBN 1-891830-65-1

About our reviews: We review independently produced comics. It's true. We do it for the love of reading them and for the love of writing about them. We don't care whether or not you buy them based on our reviews, but we will make every effort to give you what information we can about the comics we review that are available for sale. We review comics that are put out by the small publishing houses, comics that are put out by small art collectives, and comics that are put out by individuals. We'll try to review every comic we get in-house, but sometimes that's just not possible. Sorry.

This issue's reviewers: Chris Burkhalter (CB), Ari Charney (AC), Hatuey Diaz (HD), Christa Donner (CD), Lisa Groshong (LG), Jaime Hosticka (JH), Anne Elizabeth Moore (AEM) **Edited by** Laura Pearson (LP)

King-Cat #64

The most recent issue of *King-Cat* is dedicated to the memory of Porcellino's father and pairs written essays on his life and death with the visually minimal, emotionally rich comics *King-Cat* has become known for. Contemplative and bittersweet, this issue confronts the pain of loss with honesty and sincerity. It's also punctuated with new appreciation for the song "Renegade" by Styx. (CD)

\$3, John Porcellino, *Split and a Half*, P.O. Box 170535, San Francisco, CA 94117

Little Garden #1: Wildlife; Little Garden #2: Old Friends

Whatever these two 4 1/4" x 4 3/4" black-and-white minis are trying to tell me, they're pretty terrific. Accompanied by vague, clipped captions, a series of pastoral images show people—alone or in groups—working, eating, relaxing, and again working. The pictures don't add up to a narrative, but they do coalesce into what I apprehensively interpret as a vision of communal living—a fanciful rendering of the idea of working to live, rather than living to work, as the cliché goes. It isn't quite utopian: in both issues of *Little Garden*, there are conspicuous examples of theft and laziness, but even the dude attached to a tree by a leash beams with contentment. The humanoid figures depicted generally have a peculiar characteristic or two—a tail, a third eye, hooves, wings, a horn—evoking an air of mythology (or, maybe they're just mutant hippies). The drawing style itself reminds me of the stuff of legends or archaeological artifacts and yet feels very current. (CB)

\$1, Ayo, 39 Esplanade, Mount Vernon, NY 10553, ayo80gum@yahoo.com

Manchild: A Celebration of Twenty Years of Doodles

Manchild is a fitting retrospective for Brian Walsby's *Mad Magazine*-inspired comic spoofs of the '80s hardcore scene. Initially publishing work in various punk zines, Walsby was subsequently responsible for a number of memorable flyers and album covers. Any diehard fans of music from that era deserve to wince uneasily as they recognize themselves parodied in his panels. Though occasionally his satires feel rushed (and Walsby does admit to having dashed off some of his work), many of his references are hilarious. His autobiographical account "Black Flag . . . and Me!" succeeds in mocking himself, his obsessive knowledge of the band, and the band itself. One panel depicts Walsby's fanboy phone conversation with producer Spot, as Spot acknowledges that "right now Chuck and Dez are hanging out and listening to some Hawkwind!" Another illustrates the disappointment Walsby and his roommate experience suffering through each of the Black Flag spin-off projects. His roommate declares, "Dude . . . The new DC3 record is awful!! It's so bad!!!!" as Walsby gasps in apparent astonishment. (AC)

\$12, Brian Walsby, *Volumeone*, www.volumeone.com

The Murder of Abraham Lincoln

Admittedly, this is the only book that I have read from Geary's Treasury of Victorian Murder. I was reluctant,

having prejudged it to be dry and, well...Victorian. But this graphic novel proved to be an intriguing read. While it has a bibliography and presents itself as at least slightly historically relevant (which it may well be), Geary's work firmly plants itself in legend, engaging and involving the reader with leading glances, unfinished threads, and hints at scandal. He digs into the events of Lincoln's murder, going far back into the family history of the killer. Where he can, Geary sees every element to its end, including the path of Lincoln's funeral train and the hunt and execution of the alleged conspirators. Where he can't, he enjoys dry speculation. Geary demonstrates a high-quality use of the comics form with evocative illustrations, and his laborious use of line to create texture and "color" is focused and lovely. His panels and pages are tightly contained with thick, precise borders, and his spaces are so concisely filled that the serious tone of dark journalism is always consistent. The pacing and paneling is fantastic, and Geary truly understands how to move time across a page. Typically, I'm not so into the minutiae of history, nor do I care for true crime stories (call me a prude, but I find that the mystique is usually, on some level, simply bloodthirsty revelry). So the fact that I truly enjoyed this book is a real testament to Geary's panache as a comics artist and storyteller. (JH)

\$15.95, Rick Geary, NBM Publishing, 555 8th Ave, Suite 1202, New York, NY 10018, <http://www.nbmpublishing.com>, ISBN 1-56163-425-5

Nothing Left To Lose

An adventure story set largely inside a psychiatric hospital, *Nothing Left To Lose* focuses on the difficulties that arise from protagonist Joe's inability to rely on his own perceptions. Plagued with involuntary apocalyptic visions, Joe seeks the help of the Sunny Elms psychiatric facility but quickly finds their brand of treatment counterproductive. Meanwhile, on the outside, Gerald encounters a terrifying entity in a closet while working at CAS Laboratories. As the two characters' paths slowly converge, *NLT* tries its hand at some tricky narrative experiments, with varying degrees of success. This book falls a little short of the mark, both as a critique of mental disorder treatment trends and as an action-thriller, but at over 200 pages, you could do a whole lot worse for the price. (CB)

\$6.99, Josh Farkas, Water Media, www.refreshingcontent.com, ISBN 0-9759775-0-4

The Push Man and Other Stories

The first in a planned series, *The Push Man* is an intriguing introduction to a truly innovative artist, the so-called "grandfather of Japanese alternative comics." The book consists of morally ambiguous slice-of-life tales, inspired mostly by police reports and human interest articles that cover everything from sexual repression to abortion. Many of the strips fall into a mold: repressed laconic guy goes about his day, freaks out,

commits act of violence. What's disturbing is that almost all of these acts of violence are directed towards women, and women in general are portrayed almost exclusively as either the protagonist's sexual obsession or the trigger that sets the said repressed laconic guy off. It's the stories that break this mold—"My Hitler" and "Make-Up" in particular—and make for truly compelling reading. These are moving, contemplative stories of people finding respite in the face of urban alienation. Highly recommended for anyone interested in alternative comics history or anybody looking for something more out of their manga than the usual fare. (HD)

\$19.95, Yoshihiro Tatsumi, Drawn & Quarterly, www.drawnandquarterly.com, ISBN 1-896597-85-8

QWERTY: APE Special Edition

The story of a working single mother and her young son, *Qwerty* gets a tad *Erin Brockovich*-y. The narrative tends to overstate the story's message, but it ends pleasantly. (CB)

\$4, Josh Farkas, Water Media, www.refreshingcontent.com

Rabid Animal Komix #5

Even readers versed in the darkest of satire will find that this isn't it. In his offensive, self-published minicomic, Hersh offers little else except shock, which always equals disappointing and boring comics. Too bad, because he's a decent cartoonist (a la Steve Holland). (JH)

\$2.95, Mike Hersh, Krankin' Komix, PO Box 9389, Berkeley, CA 94709-0389, <http://www.krankinkomix.com>

Reporter #5

Fifth in a series of short stories that revolve around a small town in 1956, this issue focuses on seven soldiers questioning their roles in the Korean War. Though a resource list at the beginning indicates extensive research, the book does little to illuminate the experiences of its characters or the war itself. (CD)

\$3, Dylan Williams, Sparkplug Comic Books, PO Box 10952, Portland, OR, 97296-0952, <http://www.sparkplugcomicbooks.com>

(Roscoe) Fatty Arbuckle and his Funny Friends

Kinema Comic, a full-page comic published in 1921 by the Amalgamated Press, Ltd. in London, has fallen into the public domain. In it, various antics of leading ladies, comedians, and screen stars—Fatty Arbuckle, Mabel Normand, Jack Cooper, Polly Moran—are described in the single-panel-with-typewritten-text style popular in the '20s. In this collection, stories of Fatty Arbuckle are preserved, and they are important, humorous, and interesting. Yet the strips are printed in a fairly dark grey, practically unretouched, which serves a new contemporary audience almost not at all. Moreover, every other page proclaims that Marilyn Slater compiled these pieces for us in 2004, and she claims, the indicia states, the copyright on "this collection." This is the nightmare of the public domain: once work falls into it, it will sim-

ply be taken and re-presented by someone else. Which almost makes moot the point of representing great work from the past in the first place. The story of Fatty outwitting a "nasty nut" by hiding in a rain barrel and holding a dog's water bowl over his head, causing the "bad lad" to believe he can't be hiding in a barrel full top with water, is charming, yet I certainly can't give Slater credit for it. And no further authorial information is presented besides the publication info presented above. Clearly, something should be done with these works—they deserve a larger, modern audience—yet the muddiness of this collection is not it. (AEM)

\$4.95, Various, Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, <http://www.fantagraphics.com>

Skim

The first in a series following Kim "Skim" Takota, a chubby goth girl navigating the awkwardness of sexuality, spirituality, and high-school melodrama. Wiccan charms and good 'ol teenage insecurity mediate Skim's dealings with parental separation, popular-kid suicide, and her own blossoming teacher-student romance. Mariko Tamaki's writing is great, with authentic characters and dead-on dialogue, and Jillian's alternately scratchy and fluid drawing style suits the material perfectly. I look forward to more of this. (CD)

\$4, Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki, Kiss Machine, PO Box 108, Station P, Toronto, ON M5S 2S8, Canada, <http://www.kissmachine.org>

Spiral-Bound: Top Secret Summer

Packaged to look like a kid's well-used spiral-bound notebook, complete with paper clip and scribbles, Aaron Renier's debut graphic novel brims with imagination. The story follows the "top secret" summer activities of a crew of quirky animals—from secret crushes and secret art projects to pond monsters and underground trams. At times the over-rendered backgrounds upstage the simply drawn characters, and not everyone will be able to stomach 180 pages of cuteness, but if bears playing accordions and mice wearing hair bows is your thing, you're bound to be entertained! (LP)

Aaron Renier, Top Shelf Productions, www.topshelfcomic.com, ISBN 1-891830-50-3

Sutton Impact: The Political Cartoons of Ward Sutton

Sutton Impact collects Ward Sutton's recent political cartoons in a 128-page collection that's biting, clever, and laugh-out-loud funny. Unfortunately, the cartoons draw from a horrific reality of unprovoked war, blind consumerism, and mass apathy. In holding a mirror up to our society, Sutton shows us a picture of ourselves that is as depressing as it is hilarious. Cartoons like "The Schlock 'n' Roll Newsstand" remind me of the Wacky Packages I loved as a kid, and Sutton's annotations often add a welcome layer of context to cartoons that originally appeared in the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, and

COMICS

other publications as mainstream as *TV Guide*. Sutton's work is as intelligent as the best political commentary, and his wonderfully subversive humor adds sugarcoating to what would otherwise be a very bitter pill. (LG) \$18.95, Ward Sutton, Seven Stories Press, www.sevenstories.com

Tricked

Alex Robinson is a graphic novelist. As one of the few US cartoonists who can really proclaim that title, he's already established himself as unique and worthy of reading. His first effort, however, *Box Office Poison*, was a comics-geek insider tale with few complex characters and almost no subtlety. But, it was long, contained a few inventive moments, and was a fairly new approach in the comic-book world, so it won a number of awards. Thankfully, it also gave Alex Robinson the notoriety to secure a publisher for his second graphic novel, *Tricked*, which utilizes such standard literary tropes as metaphor, character depth, and fully developed narrative. And they work! A novel in every sense, *Tricked* tells a number of stories: an estranged daughter locates her father, whom she didn't realize is gay; a pert waitress develops self-esteem and finds true love; a Latina temp is raised up out of the throngs and marries the American rock star; a lonely and dejected man fucks up his own life and takes it out on whoever else he can find. There's even intrigue—crimes of passion, sexual promiscuity, a deranged psychopath—all told through Robinson's maturing drawing style, intelligent but not showy panel construction, and a smart approach to lettering that should almost become standard for graphic novels. (AEM) \$19.95, Alex Robinson, Top Shelf Productions, www.topshelfcomic.com, ISBN 1-891830-73-2

The Unexpurgated Tale of Lordie Jones

Lordie Jones has got troubles worse than any other middle schooler you know. First, he tries to rip off the tooth fairy—a spiteful, snake-tailed man with female breasts and a fast temper, and then a pig starts growing inside his stomach. Which causes his ass to grow really big, so all the other kids make fun of him. This retold Caribbean folk tale is lovingly presented in a perfect-bound square format, printed in brown on cream-colored paper. This attention to detail helps soften the blow of Lordie's troubles, as does the fact that the pig finally crawls out of the boy at the end of the tale and takes him on a magical space ride. Marc Ngui's cross-hatching and big-eyed characters perfectly portray the sense of amazement that courses through each of the mean kids, stuck in school with no belly-living pigs to whisk them away. (AEM)

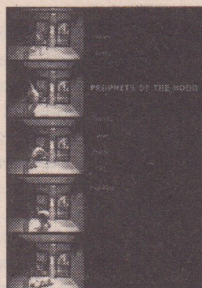
\$12, Marc Ngui, Conundrum Press, P.O. Box 55003 CSP Fairmount, Montreal, Quebec, H2T 3E2, Canada, <http://www.home.ican.net/conpress>, ISBN 1-894994-08-6

Watching Days Become Years

The strength of this comic is how it reads convincingly as poetry instead of traditional narrative. Unfortunately, the poetry itself isn't very good. True to the title, *WDBY* chronicles a lot of wasted time and existential angst. (CD) \$5, Jeff LeVine, Sparkplug Comic Books, PO Box 10952, Portland, OR, 97296-0952, <http://www.sparkplugcomicbooks.com>

BOOKS

Edited by Joe Meno



Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop

Imani Perry
Duke University Press

As a fan of hip hop, I've discovered little bits about it here and there over the years . . . it's been a kind of journey of discovery. *Prophets of the Hood* takes all of the knowledge I've gained and turns it into the most dry, scholarly piece of work imaginable. Don't get me wrong,

I know that's the point: a reference for those that don't really understand certain (or any) aspects of the hip hop culture. But as a fan, Imani Perry's book took all the life out of the half fantasy, half reality that is hip hop, and made it almost too thought out. I doubt that NWA were thinking: "As west coast rappers, we should really personify the ghetto gangster lifestyle. This way, even though we're portraying it violently, urban youth can see that there is a way out and there's others like us, but not just through violence and police slayings. Check out our new track 'Express Yourself!'"

Perry breaks down everything from lyrics (the most interesting part of the book) to imagery and puts it all right out on the table. Definitions of different mindsets (pimp, drug dealer) that shape any given MC are spelled out, as are variants on types of songs including the narrative, allegory, braggadocio, etc. When defining why a rapper chooses any given style, one should be able to reach their own conclusions through his or her lyrics, but if you need a more clinical sounding answer, *Prophets of the Hood* is the book for you.

An example of how the whole book reads can be summed up with this sentence, taken from a section on which funk and soul are related to hip hop in the fact that, like both aforementioned genres, hip hop, at its core, needs to make you feel good: "The MC reminds listeners of how good the lyrics can make them feel. He seduces. On the other hand, he also reminds his audience about the yearning for beats when they are not playing, the longing for renewed stimulation by the poetry. He tempts."

The amount of research that must have gone into this text is clearly massive. The only problem being that it's presented in such a way that if you're already a fan, you're either going to start overanalyzing whatever track you're listening to or you're going to be completely turned off of whatever you're listening to. I kept hoping that lyrics wouldn't pop up that I had taken to mean one thing and be completely defined as another.

Ask a million fans why they enjoy hip hop and you're going to get a million different answers. Perry does a good job at defining what those answers could be (as well as how they might fit into the scheme of things), but alienates casual and hard-core fans alike by overemphasizing the specifics of the genre. —Dave Hofer

Big Lonesome

Jim Ruland

Open up Jim Ruland's debut collection of short stories *Big Lonesome* and you are going to be transported. You might find yourself at a meat packing plant in old Chicago at the turn of the century. Blindly open the book again and you might be at a zoo in Belfast waiting on a Nazi air raid. Another turn of the pages might have you following around Popeye the Sailor in his earlier days. Good writers guide you to places you've never been before and then gently drop you off to explore on your own, but they are never far away. Jim Ruland does this in *Big Lonesome*. Almost like your dad when you were first learning to ride a bicycle, he directs you to places you want to be, even if they are a bit uncomfortable at first, because he knows you'll be fine in the end.

Ruland takes a lot of risks with these stories in both form and content. There are the zoo keepers who must kill off their animals before the Nazis invade in "Night Soil Man," unauthorized biographies of both Popeye and Dick Tracy, and the detailed diary-like notation of a stalker in "Still Beautiful." Like with most gamblers, not every risk Ruland takes pays off, but the majority of them do, and when they do they pay big. —Robert Biedrzycki
Gorsky Press

How to Rent a Negro

Damali Ayo

Written as a guide book, the relentlessly smart and wickedly humorous *How to Rent a Negro* argues that black people are being used all the time anyway so they might as well get paid for the service. The book offers many helpful pointers for people on both sides of the potential business arrangement.

One of the "Common questions you'll have to answer," specifically written for black people putting themselves up for rent is "Why are you always talking about racism? Can't you just relax? I tell people not to talk about race around black people 'cause you'll get really angry and call them racist." This is really the core of what Ayo is attacking, in her humor-laden prose. She takes a whispered-about subject like race relations, and not only addresses what's going on in America, but loudly parodies these very real tensions.

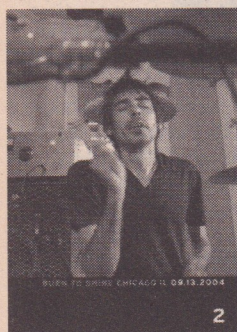
Again, I want to emphasize how funny and how important this book is. *How to Rent a Negro* never loses focus, and the instructional tone never wavers. Included are a sample invoice ("compare skin tones = \$100 per comparison x ____ times = \$ ____"), a glossary for renters, textbook-looking photographs illustrating common gaffes, and letters written to Ayo in response to her website, www.rent-a-negro.com.

—Meredith Grah

DVDS

About our reviews: We review independently produced DVDs. We don't limit our reviews to just music DVDs or just low-budget horror flicks, or any of the other indie rag review fare. We take on all comers (though we do reserve the right of not review some stuff for space reasons). What we mean is that we will take as much time writing about a new and amazing music DVD as we will a new foreign import or a re-release of a lost classic. The key is that it's made outside of the Hollywood system. Making a film, or a videozine, or documenting your band's tour, or anything else that ends up on a disc, is a tiny miracle, we know—so even if your review isn't the greatest, good on you for making it anyway.

This issue's reviewers: Dan Agacki (DA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Chris Burkhalter (CB), Mairead Case (MC), Vincent Chung (VC), Dwayne Clinton (DC), Searah Deysach (SD), Art Ettinger (AE), Eric Grubbs (EG), Anne Elizabeth Moore (AEM), Kyle Ryan (KR), Matt Siblo (MS). **Edited by Daniel Sinker (DS)**



Burn To Shine 2: Chicago Christopher Green, Director

I walk by an empty husk of a house almost every day, my infant son warbling in his stroller, my dog pulling at a squirrel as it runs up a tree. The cracked and empty foundation sits sandwiched tightly between two newly renovated homes, an odd marker of what once was. Last year there was a home there, derelict and old, standing on a street that was rapidly becoming anything but. Now that home is rubble. But before it was demolished—the day before, to be exact—the 100-year old

home that once stood there played host to some of the best bands this city has to offer, filmed for the DVD series *Burn to Shine*.

Burn to Shine, the brainchild of Fugazi drummer Brendan Canty, has a simple mission: film local bands, sans audience, in buildings slated to be destroyed. The first installment of the series, shot in glorious widescreen HD video in Canty's hometown of Washington DC, brought together local luminaries like Bob Mould, the Evens, Ted Leo, and others. The day after filming, the house was burned to the ground by marshals for firefighter training.

The rules laid out in *Burn to Shine 1*—bands set up and play in one-hour increments, only one song is recorded, no applause—are adhered to in the Chicago edition as well, and the slightly disconcerting effect of live music filmed without an audience still takes some getting used to. But the camerawork offers a level of proximity and detail that simply wouldn't be possible in a concert setting and, frankly, as long as the bands documented can bring it without the crowd feedback, they get no quarrel from me.

But can they? For the most part, yes. And in some cases, I'd add an *and how*. With a music community as expansive as Chicago's, picking nine bands to represent it is a daunting task. Canty turned to Bob Weston, who, when not playing bass in Shellac, is a well-respected local recording engineer, to choose the bands for the DVD. Weston offers up an eclectic mix of the big names in the underground—his own Shellac, Tortoise, Wilco—with smaller, lesser known acts.

Most of the bands show up with their A game: set up in the lime-green living room, Shellac tries to tear the house down simply by force of will; alt-country duo Freakwater proves that the spare expanse of the human voice can be as brutal as the largest amp; and, in the true revelation of the film, Tortoise shows that no matter how jazzy they get as they grow as a band, they can still strip it down and spit it out when they want to. Rockers the Ponys, Tight Phantomz, and Red Eyed Legends, also offer up the goods. Wilco, on the other hand, slumbers through their number, and Pit Er Pat suffers from a serious case of hipsteritis (though I'd be hard pressed to crack a smile either if I had to follow the accordion playing, tap-dancing whirlwind that is the Lonesome Organist).

The film ends with the home being torn down—it's a story that has been told thousands of times over in this city—*out with the old, in with the new*. Soon enough the hole that was left by the demolition will be filled, a new building erected in its place, and a young couple will move in.

The same can be said about the music scene here in Chicago: That which feels old is ultimately torn down, the hole left on stage filled by someone who feels like they're playing these chords for the first time. You don't grow old as a band gracefully in this town—to do so, you fight against the very forces that built this city in the first place: the forces of constant renewal and change.

These forces make it hard to document the Chicago scene in any meaningful way. It's constantly changing—growing and shrinking, moving from one location to another. As a result, a project like the *Burn to Shine* DVD series almost feels doomed from the start, fated to crumble like the home it takes place in. After all, how do you create a documentary of a scene in near-constant flux?

Canty, director Cristoph Green, and local curator Weston, smartly decide to not answer that question. Instead, they offer a snapshot of a community in never-ending motion frozen in time.

—Daniel Sinker

The American Astronaut Cory McAbee, writer and director

Offering dive bars on asteroids, disintegration guns, and planets of women, *The American Astronaut* is a garage-rockabilly semi-musical set in space, with music provided by the Billy Nayer Show. Astronauts are akin to lone motorcycle cowboys in the rough-neck West of the solar system. The main character is the leather-clad American Astronaut, a Han Solo of sorts who has a small ship and is willing to cargo some people across the solar system, a girl to a male-only mining colony on Jupiter and a boy to Venus, a planet of women. It's a passable story for this eclectic film with a B-movie budget and late-night sensibilities. But its style is not cheap: The film and its overall aesthetic are fantastic, waxing eloquent within its meager means. It's black and white, has a gritty and industrial feel, and film-noir cinematography. Any limitations of its plot or dialogue match its Ed Wood aspirations. The DVD includes galleries of storyboards and close-ups of various set pieces, like beer labels. The director's commentary is actually somewhat interesting as well: Rather than an audio track, it's

video with Cory McAbee, the writer and director, in front of a screening at a bar in Brooklyn, taking questions from a small audience. (BA)
Commodore Films/BNS Productions

American Beer: A Bockumentary Paul Kermizian, director

In 2003, five guys had a very smart idea. No doubt fired on by that evening's beverage of choice, this group jumped in a van and trekked 12,000 miles, visiting every big independent brewery they could find in the US. The idea was to investigate the sociopolitical machinations indies face when going up against one of the most monolithic and least sexy industries in the US: big, bad beer manufacturers. Much like I imagine their original discussion did, however, this documentary quickly devolves into utter drunkenness, sloppy stupidity, and vomit. Moreover: the film's wonky pacing, constant slew of fattened white-dude characters, and completely jumbled timeline make it impossible to even turn into a decent drinking game. (AEM)
Six Hundred Films www.sixhundred.com

CLUTfest 2004 – The Documentary
Kat, V., and Emily producers/directors

"Punk rock," says Dan, staring around his unicorn-tuft, "is not a bunch of dudes sitting around watching a bunch of dudes." Amen. Enter CLITfest (Combating Latent Inequality Together), a three-day Minneapolis festival of music and workshops sponsored by the Breast Brigade.

Clearly, the majority of CLITfester live marginalized lives, and so I applaud Primal Tek for documenting the resulting rainbow. The look is not unlike that of an impassioned zinester newbie: rawly xeroxed and meticulously credited, complete with norm-shaking stills and color/shadow manipulation. And really, who cares about detail when poster artist Chelsea is photoshopped into a Neil Gaiman doppelganger, when we get screw-you thrash-pogos and solid chunks of solid art? Who cares when we hear the Profit\$ get-up stand-up spit and Garmonbozia's angry cello, the screeching of Daisy's Compact Mice and the brilliantly named (and made-up) Menstrual Tramps? Not me. At least, not until centerstage feminist punk is something more than an anomaly.

If, however, you didn't go and you're not mix-tape-maniac, the 35-minute documentary and accompanying concert footage will ring wrong. There's not a lot of dialogue, and the most interesting debate (on gender identity) is cut cold by battery death. There's a lot of inequality-buzz but only one non-Caucasian, plus non-sequitor photos of Dubya and mushroom clouds (sure, he's a chunk-lump, but let's keep the issues straight).

Conclusion: save your money, but spend it on CLITfest #3, Summer 2006. (MC)

Primal Tek Productions <http://www.profanexistence.com>, <http://www.clitfest.org>

Crane World

Pablo Trapero, Director

Rulo is an Argentinean construction crane operator. Not so long ago, he enjoyed some success in a well-known rock band. The memories of these days are dear to him, but he doesn't seem to mind that he's not still at it now, nor does he seem to mind his job. He gets by, enjoys the company of a few good friends, has a decent relationship with his layabout son, and has just begun dating a woman who runs a sandwich shop. Unfortunately for Rulo, liking his work doesn't necessarily guarantee keeping his job.

Shot on gorgeously grainy black-and-white film, utilizing untrained actors, and telling a story that's refreshingly low on incident, *Crane World* is one of the finer disciples of neorealism to come along in recent years. Certainly it's a pointed portrait, but a subtle one that strays far from didacticism and never panders for your sympathies. This isn't a film about a low-income survival or Argentinean labor issues, though you'll definitely find those things here. It's an unpretentious and gently humorous film about a guy named Rulo, which, for my money, is a much better thing. (CB)

Facets Video, www.facets.org

Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y

Johan Grimontprez

Consisting mostly of stock footage, newsreel and other archival footage, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* is a stirring and disturbing documentary on airline hijacking. Looking at the pre-9/11 history of the act as told

through the media's portrayal, you see it represented in all parts of the world at various times in the last century. By showing various hijackings in a jumbled and non-sequential order, you see them as they are: random cruelties that know no time or place. The only new material shot specifically for the film consists of point-of-view shots of driving and sitting around in places with a voiceover that gives some sense of what may be going through the mind of a hijacker. Wrapping this together with the older stuff makes a strong impact without giving the feeling of being talked-down to. Though there are no extras on this disc, this 68-minute documentary is ample enough. (EG)

Other Cinema, www.othercinemadv.com

Experiments in Terror

The headfuck visuals for your next scumbag party have arrived. This DVD compiles six short avant-garde films that are best loosely described as horror. The program begins with *Outer Space*, a disorienting visual explosion of double exposures and malfunctioning film apparatus. A wide range of emotions and states of sanity are explored via pure abstract visualization with no narrative to speak of. *Ursula*, a narrative short from 1961 follows. The acid trip visuals seem ahead of their time, while the 16-year-old female voice dubbed in for an 8-year-old girl is laughable. *Journey into the Unknown* is a neon nightmare of disembodied sounds and abstract images. This assault on the eyes may prove seizure inducing for some viewers. *The Virgin Sacrifice* from 1969 may be the best or worst film here depending on your perspective. It begins with porno-bad acting and melts into freakout visuals including surgery footage. That it's apparently a recruitment film for the Church of Satan makes it that much better. *Tuning the Sleeping Machine* continues the abstraction via visual non-sequiters, ethereal music and ghostly images. *Dawn of an Evil Millennium* ends things on a sour note with its student film imitating Ed Wood vibe. (RR)

Other Cinema DVD

Juvies

Leslie Neale, director

This documentary drives home the dismal realities resulting from the rising practice of trying teens as adults in violent crime cases. Much of the film is devoted to interviews with kids in their mid-teens serving lengthy sentences in adult prisons in California. Interestingly, these kids had a substantial role in the film's very production, shooting many sequences themselves and conducting more than a few of the interviews. Perhaps because of this, the kids speak with disarming candor and with an astonishing lack of bravado. If it achieved nothing else, *Juvies* would impress for the earnest, unforced sincerity it gets from its subjects. But *Juvies* does one better, balancing these human stories with a thorough, persuasive argument. The film is clear about its intent: to show that the prosecution of minors as adults is far too common and for all the wrong reasons. *Juvies* doesn't offer clear alternatives, but it does make it abundantly clear that tougher sentencing isn't a viable solution, and has proved at best incidental to the prevention of teen crime. (CB)

Chance Films, www.juvies.net

Listen

Miroslav Sebestik, director

Are you listening? Are you really listening to things around you? That's the core message of this documentary about sounds and noises. Too often we only hear what we need to, and nothing more. Listening, though, is an active process in which we focus on the sounds we hear, whether from an album or the cars on the street. Lots of musicians are involved throughout the film with passages played from their works. John Cage provides a central interview discussing the differences between notes and sound. To him, all sound is worthy, from a refrigerator's hum to the footsteps of an upstairs neighbor. In fact, he appreciates those sounds over notes since they don't have a message attached: notes have emotion, a meaning, but sounds just emanate from a car. The film features lots of other interviews, mostly with French musicians (it is mostly in French with subtitles available). The documentary is thought provoking if, at two hours, a bit long. It has elaborate presentation and editing for 1992 and its DVD debut now seem contemporary, even if the hairstyles aren't. Additional features are minimal, mainly extracts of sounds and music from the film in unadulterated format. (BA)

Facets Video, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave, Chicago IL 60614, www.facets.org

Lucero: Bright Stars On Lonesome Nights

Andrew Leggett, director

At the very beginning of *Lucero: Bright Stars On Lonesome Nights*, singer/guitarist Ben Nichols says, "The guys in Lucero, they don't have nothing else going for them. The four of us, this is all we got, basically." It's a shame such an insightful moment occurs right off the bat, because the rest of the film lacks such perspective. Shot mostly on video, *Lucero* mixes interviews with the group's four members (and people who know them) with live performances, studio and tour footage covering the usual stuff; the band's history, the chemistry of its members, making the group's second album, etc. In spite of the occasional intriguing moment, such as a funny part where the members attempt to describe Lucero's sound, *Lucero* is a choppy, often awkward documentary. Footage of live performances end before the songs do, and crowd noise competes with the music. Intriguing moments go uninvestigated, like when Lucero plays a big awards show at the Memphis Pyramid but is nearly sabotaged by Nichols' equipment problems. In another part, Nichols and others mention some article they're nervous about, but the reference is never explained. Dangling moments like these undercut the doc's effectiveness and with its other shortcomings, *Lucero* ultimately sabotages itself. (KR)

New Scratch Records, newscratch.com, Hyperactive Productions, filmbmx@yahoo.com

Mara' Akate - Congratulations On Your Impending Geography, DVD

Congratulations On Your Impending Geography (a title that sounds like a cheap shot at sounding deep) follows Mara' Akate on their tour in the summer of 2003. The tour started out in their home of Indiana and went east to New York then continued on for five weeks in Europe, spanning twelve countries. The film manages to cover the basic tour documentary topics:

There's live footage, shots of scenery in most cities, and a decent amount of footage of the band screwing around. They also make sure to include interviews and live footage of the bands that they played with. Including the other bands—Yage, Off Minor, Atom & His Package and L.A.D.S. among others—seems to keep everything a little more interesting. For the most part, the bands that Mara' Akate played with fall under the umbrella of screamy artsy hardcore. The main gripe I have with this DVD is the live sound quality. You don't really get much of an idea of what the bands really sound like because it's so distorted. Other than that, it's a pretty enjoyable watch. It has a "this could have been made by your band on your tour" feel to it. (DA)

HCNL Records, www.hcnl.com

Nomads And No-Zones

Gretta Snider and Vanessa Renwick directors

A collection of Snider and Renwick's short films, *Nomads And No-Zones* ranges from heavy-handed, pretentious art-school flotsam to funny portraits of intriguing eccentrics/nutcases. Sadly, the former outnumber the latter in the 11 films collected on this DVD. Example: Renwick's *The Yodeling Lesson* follows a woman bicycling down a street. Just as it reaches the "Um, what is this?" point, the woman strips naked and continues riding her bike. Its three minutes feel at least twice that long. On the other side is Snider's *Urine Man*, where a clearly disturbed street person pontificates on the pointlessness of food and the importance of drinking your urine (or "yourine," as he calls it). "You are what you eat!" he says. "You can't be yourself unless you eat yourself!" *Urine Man* and Renwick's *Richart*, which follows another eccentric/mentally imbalanced person, are fascinating, but many of the other films get lost in heavy-handed symbolism, leaden narration (in Renwick's case) and look-how-deep-we-are pretentiousness. Case in point: "I am making the films that make the whole world cry," writes Renwick in the DVD's liner notes. Ironic or not, that pretty much sums up the all-too-serious nature of *Nomads And No-Zones*. (KR)

Facets Video, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, IL 60614, [facets.org](http://www.facets.org)

Northstar - The Uncomfortable Camera

Doug Spangenberg, director

This rather promising Alabama-based band announced its break-up earlier this year, so this DVD serves as a decent posthumous document. *The Uncomfortable Camera*'s main feature is a 40-minute show filmed in Long Island along with all three of the band's videos and some in-studio material. The show itself is very well done: multiple cameras capture the band at its best as they constantly move around the stage and play their hearts out. No, this isn't as life-changing as seeing Hot Water Music playing in a warehouse, but compared with the mass-marketed spectacle of nu-emo and cheemo bands these days, Northstar's set is a reminder that all is not lost. As far as the extras, the solo in-studio acoustic tracks are intimate but rather forgettable, the making-of in-studio featurette is standard (band and producer worked well together and made a good record), and the videos (complete with deadpan bandmember commentary) are non-essential. (EG)

Triple Crown Records, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Plan-it-X Fest

Serene Petersen, director

In 2004, Plan-it-X Records threw a 10-year birthday party in its hometown of Bloomington, Indiana. Over three days, dozens of bands played, the DIY community was reaffirmed, some local charities got some dough, and the kids had buckets of fun. This document includes one live song from each band, short interviews, and a couple of extras. Some highlighted names include Turn Pale, This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, Japanner, Soophie Nun Squad, Shotwell, and Toys that Kill. I'm a little disturbed at the copious amount of yelping singer-songwriters showcased: I knew folk was becoming more of an influence, but had no idea it was the next huge thing within the scene.

The camerawork has slight unease, but never strays off subject. While it's purely documentary, I wish a little more thought was put into the framing. Effective editing and great menus make for a solid DIY release, despite its unfortunately condescending production notes.

So if you were there, here's some memories. And if you weren't, here's what you missed. (VC) Plan-it-X Records, PO Box 3521, Bloomington, IN 47402

Rainbow

Gao Xiao-Song, director

In this Hemingway-esque tale of sexual frustration, tradition clashes with love's desire against the backdrop of war. Rainbow is a mute cellist living in a rural Chinese village. Caught in an arranged marriage with Twilight, a crippled and impotent kite-maker, she dreams of a life that offers more. They met through Twinkle, a bartering schoolteacher who harbors a secret love for Rainbow. The equilibrium is upset when a strapping young student named Sunshine appears for research. Rainbow finds his urbanism alluring, and Twinkle guides this courtship between her and the man of her dreams. As the Japanese invasion comes to a height, its sweeping destruction lays a parallel for Rainbow's imminent suffering. Instead of a competitive pissing contest, the film maintains an acceptance of fate, creating a tedious burn that's reminiscent of Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*. Twilight suffers through his wife's true love for an able man and Twinkle slyly juggles the love triangle, suffocating his own feelings.

The cinematography is richly colorful and exquisitely framed, despite the poor transfer. Ill-executed action, melodramatic accents, and the rock soundtrack show poor directorial decisions on Gao's part, but he has an expressive style that creates profoundly poetic compositions. (VC)

In Mandarin Chinese with English subtitles. 2004. 91 minutes. No special features. Facets Video, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, IL 60614, www.facets.org

Screamers – Live in San Francisco, September 2nd 1978

Why am I not surprised to learn, once again, that one of the most exciting bands I've heard in ages broke up over twenty years ago. Hailed as "tomorrow's leaders" by Iggy Pop and supposedly produced by Brian Eno, Screamers are one of punk rock's best-kept secrets and most unfulfilled promises. Fronted by eccentric showman Tomata Du Plenty, Screamers

seem to have predated every synth-punk band by over a decade, making it astounding how the band has gone so long without its due. The mystery becomes clearer upon the recognition that besides its numerous videos, provided as extras here, Screamers never had the gumption (or perhaps the funding) to produce a proper album. All that remains are sought-after demos, expensive bootlegs and this DVD, which provides a fascinating and surprisingly high-quality look at a band that was so ahead of its time. Plenty's crowd baiting and devilish grin make him the perfect frontman, while the rest of the band provides a devastating musical assault that's both vicious yet harmonious. (MS)

MusicVideoDistributors.com

Sheer Terror – Beaten By the Fists of God

I saw Sheer Terror play once in my hometown of Buffalo when I was in high school. I wrote them off as the epitome of lame tough-guy hardcore and never gave them another chance. Checking out this remarkable DVD, I realize that I missed out on one of the best NY hardcore bands to date. The DVD includes over two hours of material, divided evenly between a well-produced documentary and an hour-long live set from one of their CBGB farewell shows in October, 2004. All of the video and audio is first rate, and the documentary portion is way above average for any music DVD, let alone a DIY punk DVD. Past and present members of Sheer Terror as well as folks from Sick of It All, Ramones, and Dropkick Murphys do their part in explaining why Sheer Terror is such a unique band. What makes them unique is that they borrow from a full spectrum of hardcore styles, never pigeonholing themselves into a singular mode. In addition to the great DVD, an audio CD of the live show is also included, and features the same stellar production as the audio portion of the DVD. (AE)

Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

Sleepover

John Sullivan, director

Relive your teenage years complete with the angst, awkwardness, and heady, livewire confusion. This drama from 1995 (released on DVD for the first time now) will be your gateway to uncomfortable nostalgia. Writer/director John Sullivan manages to capture the pointless aggression, confused sexuality, and mindless idle time of the adolescent years in this feature length tale of a couple days in the lives of some Northeastern teens in the '90s. By alternating a somber and charged pace, Sullivan recreates the actual feel of the teen years without falling into the hyper kinetic MTV-influenced film trap. It's not a perfect portrait, as the writing and acting occasionally slip into heavy-handedness, but for an unheralded 10-year-old low budget film, it hasn't dated poorly. Original music by Jeff Buckley may be an added attraction for some. (RR)

Life Size Entertainment

Something Like Flying

Deborah Stratman, director

Deborah Stratman is a talented cinematographer in search of something to say. The three short films on *Something Like Flying* demonstrate a good deal of

talent behind the camera—the framing of each shot is beautiful and moving—but a need to find more interesting subjects to capture in the lens.

The first film, "In Order Not To Be Here" (from 2002), is a 33 minute exercise in a single idea: the suburbs are creepy. Static shots of strip malls and McMansions at night are sandwiched between surveillance footage. With no narrative (just a droning, repetitive soundtrack), this piece would work much better as an installation than packaged as DVD to watch in one sitting—not that that presentation would make the original idea any more unique.

The second film, 2004's "Kings of the Sky" is the most successful film on the disc, and reason to seek this DVD out. An hour-long documentary about an acrobatic troop's tour through the remote Chinese desert, "Kings of the Sky" is compulsively watchable and constantly surprising. To tell this remarkable tale, Stratman chooses to once again showcase her wonderful eye for composing a shot rather than telling a straightforward narrative. Because of the "stranger in a strange land" aspect to the story, Stratman's decision to stand back and let the images speak for themselves works wonderfully and each carefully crafted image is captivating as it allows the viewer unhindered entry into a captivating world.

The final film on the DVD, 1997's "From Hetty To Nancy" juxtaposes breathtaking shots of Iceland with a rambling, monotone reading of letters written about traveling to Iceland at the turn of the century. That this film predates either of its two companions by five years is telling: it's the most "art school" of the three and, juxtaposed against the far superior "Kings of the Sky" demonstrates just how far Stratman has come as an experimental filmmaker. (DS) Peripheral Produce www.peripheralproduce.com

Submachine – Loose at the Moose

I live in Pittsburgh now, but when I first saw Submachine live I was living in Cleveland. It was the mid-'90s, and everyone was so excited to see them play that they might as well have been from Belgium rather than from two hours away. This live CD/DVD set perfectly captures the band's greatness. Submachine has their brand of fast, '90s style hardcore streetpunk down to a science by now, and their live shows are phenomenal. This 73-minute DVD captures one such show in documentary format, interspersing interviews with the band and its fans throughout. The band tells humorous tales of their antics over the years, mixing in war stories regarding fending off white power kids. The audio and video are both very professional, with the audio portion standing well on its own on the included live CD. The live set was recorded at The Smiling Moose, Pittsburgh's punk bar haven that often hosts shows. Due to Pennsylvania's odd liquor laws, it's almost impossible to have all-ages shows in venues with alcohol, so bands often play two shows in one night, with The Moose being the obvious 21+ choice. Here's to another thirteen years of Submachine! (AE)

Da'Core Records, 4407 Bowes Ave., West Mifflin, PA 15122, www.da-core.com

Suicide Girls – The First Tour

One of the performers in this film can strip down to her g-string while flawlessly twirling a hula-hoop—it

is a fucking amazing thing to watch and the best thing about this behind-the-scenes film of the SG's 2004 US burlesque tour. The rest of the film features a lot of nice hooters but not much else terribly compelling. The 10 women on the tour are interviewed, their burlesque acts shown (bad dancing—ouch) and SG photo shoots are set to music, none of which is a bad thing if you like naked skinny white punk girls. I found learning about the SG's motivations for joining the website interesting (most of them talked not about their great desire to get naked online, but their desire to be a part of something with so many hot, strong women) and for the first few interviews I was paying attention, but after about the fourth one it became very repetitive and a little boring. Like a lot of concert films, this seems to be made for the die-hard SG fans, who will probably enjoy it. The rest of you should skip it and rent *Freaks & Geeks* instead. (SD)

Epitaph Records, www.epitaph.com

Table Scraps #1

Like a sprawling love letter written on a crumpled-up napkin, this earnest DVD zine does its best to represent the finest that Minneapolis has to offer. Compiled of various animated shorts, interviews, and band footage, Table Scraps gives its audience a little bit of everything. While the quality of each segment varies, ranging from professional to debatably audible, each warrants a viewing of its own. My favorite scene is the expose on a rather subdued Midwestern version of punk rock karaoke, as the filmmaker does an excellent job at making a bland gathering seem endearing. The band performances are certainly the least dynamic aspect here, although both The Sovietes and The Vibrators manage to shake things up a little. Overall, a delightfully independent little project that will hopefully branch itself out in time. (MS)

Table Scraps, P.O. Box 300033 MPLS, MN 55403

Transition Video Magazine Issue 001, DVD

I don't even know where to begin with this one, as there are a variety of different topics covered in this sprawling videozine. Even the bands fall all over the musical map: Blonde Redhead starts it out with an interview and live footage, Japanner also does a live footage/interview segment, Against Me, Engine Down and the Blood Brothers are represented with videos. The Engine Down segment also includes a "making of the video" piece—I think it actually convinced me to like the song and band a little more. Strikeforce Diablo takes you on a journey to their three shows in one evening in the Miami area. While it is fun seeing them scramble around, the shows all seemed kind of unremarkable.

The segments that I found most interesting were the ones that didn't really have anything to do with bands directly. The Sean Mahan/Stenvick Mostrom segment spotlighted some really awesome art—they've done work for No Idea bands Floor, Twelve Hour Turn, Planes Mistaken For Stars and a bunch more. The Flatline Skateboards and Alpha Record Pressing segments also tickled my fancy. *Transition* has done a good job of translating print to video. You're not holding anything in your hands, but it still has that magazine feel to it. I guess you could say they made a smooth transition. (DA)

Transition Video Magazine, www.transitionvm.com



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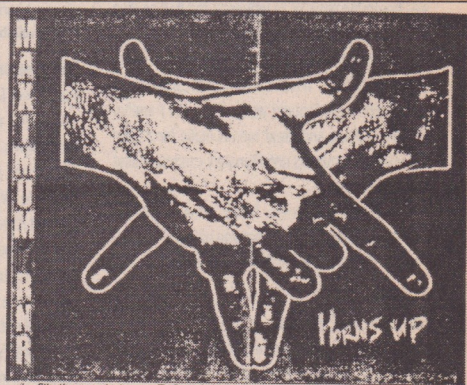


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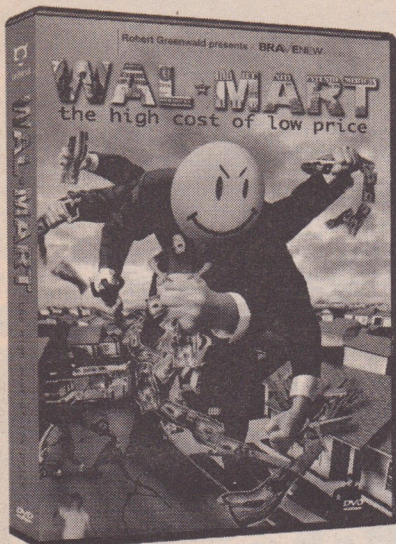


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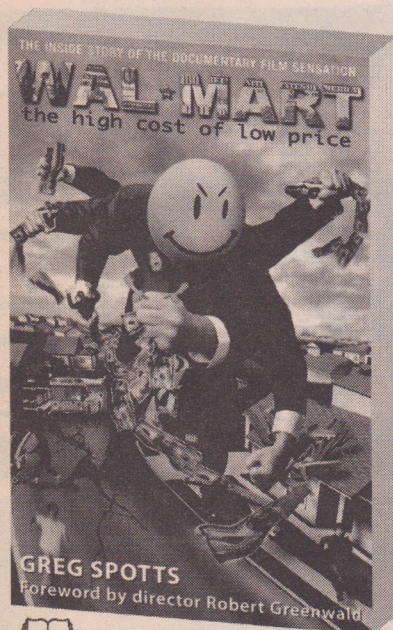
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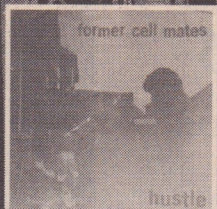
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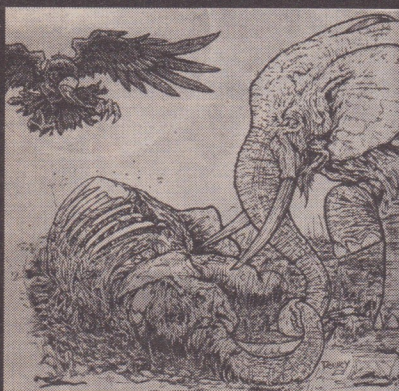
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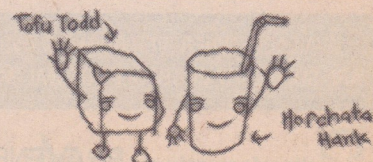
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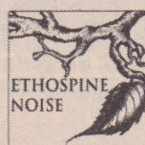
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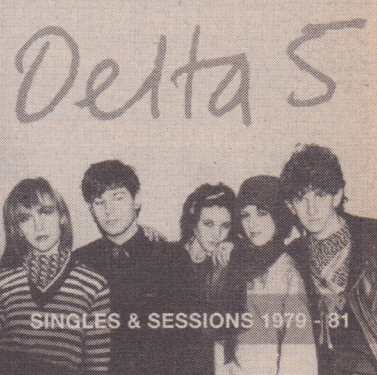
DELTA 5

1/24/05!

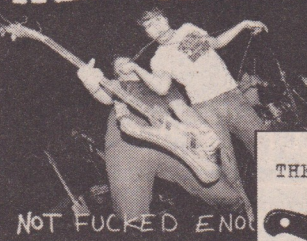
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REATARDS



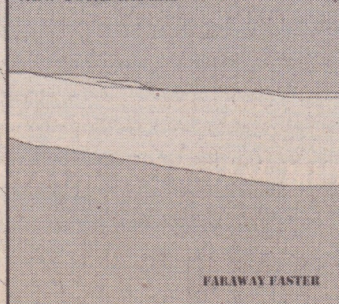
Reatards

Not Fucked Enough

New York Rifles

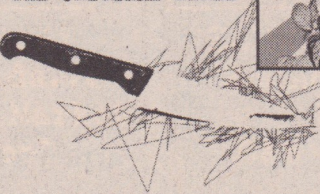
Far Away Faster

NEW YORK RIFLES



FARAWAY FASTER

THE ORIGINAL THREE

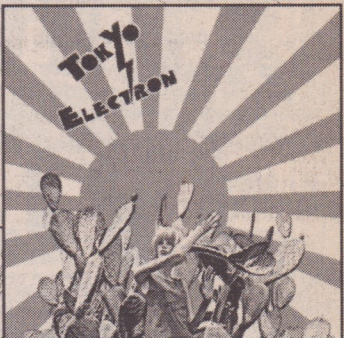


The Original Three

Been Dealt A
Losin' Hand



www.emptyRecords.com

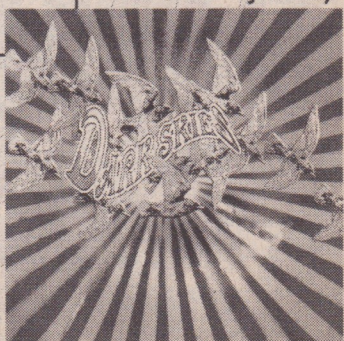


Tokyo Electron

Self Titled

The Dark Skies

Out in January



POB12301 Portland, OR 97212

see also

Where to find more information
about this issue's features.

interviewed this issue:

Miranda July

More about Miranda July can be found at:
www.mirandajuly.com or at her blog:
<http://meandyou.typepad.com>

Learning To Love You More, July's interactive art
"assignment" project is online at:
www.learningtoloveyoumore.com

Joanie 4 Jackie, the woman-filmmaker "chain-
letter" project is now run through Bard College
and is online at:
www.joanie4jackie.com

Curl Up and Die

Pick up *Unfortunately, We're Not Robots, But
the Past Ain't Through With Us*, and *But We
May Be Through with the Past* from Revelation
Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA,
92615-5232, Phone (714) 842-7584.

Luc Sante

Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York
was published by Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux
in 2003.

Walter Schreifels

A cool animation of two members of the band
drinking—and other, more pressing bits of informa-
tion—can be found at www.walkingconcert.com.

Saturday Looks Good to Me

Check out their entire discography at www.slgmt.com,
or pick up their full-lengths (*Every Night*
and *Saturday Looks Good to Me*) from Polyvinyl
Records: PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-
7140, or email info@polyvinylrecords.com.

Matt Fagan

Find out more about Fagan's oeuvre at his web-
site: www.geocities.com/meniscuserprises/.

Amy Goodman

If you don't already listen to *Democracy Now!*,
you need to get on that: www.democracynow.org.
It's also recommended you put your money
where your mouth is and donate. You can send
checks to PO Box 693, New York, NY 10013.

articles in this issue:

State of Denial

Trustworthy online resources about abortion
rights include:

Medical Students for Choice, www.ms4c.org;
Alan Guttmacher Institute, www.AGI-USA.org;
The Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.kaisernet-
work.org](http://www.kaisernet-
work.org); National Network of Abortion Funds,
www.nnaf.org; Counter Crisis [www.countercri-
sis.org](http://www.countercri-
sis.org); Planned Parenthood, [www.plannedpar-
enthood.org](http://www.plannedpar-
enthood.org); National Abortion Rights Activist

League, www.naral.org; or search Livejournal
for community-based resources.

Recommended reading:

Linda Gordon's *The Moral Property of Women:
A History of Birth Control Politics in America*;
Laura Kaplan's *The Story of Jane: The Legend-
ary Underground Abortion Service*; Norma Mc-
Corvey and Andy Meisler's *I am Roe: My Life,
Roe V. Wade, and Freedom of Choice*.

Sources on state charts include:

www.agi-usa.org; www.plannedparenthood.org;
and www.ss.ca.gov/elections/.

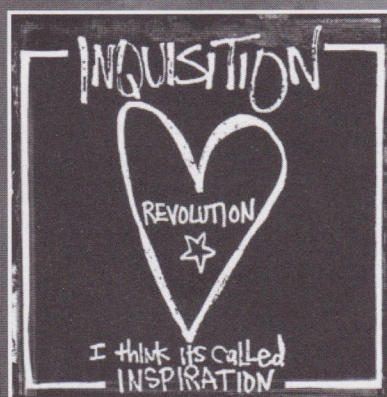
Live from the Circle Bar

Check out the cool musicians bringing the city
back: Morning 40, www.morning40.com; Hap-
py Talk Band, www.happytalkband.com; and
Alex Murray, alexmurray.com.

Asbury Park, NJ

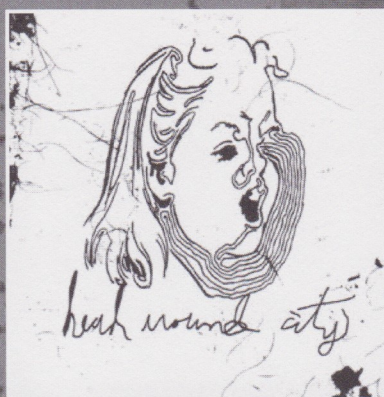
Founded by James Bradley in the 1870s, As-
bury Park, NJ was named after Francis Asbury,
the founder of Methodism in America. The of-
ficial website for the city is at [www.cityofas-
burypark.com](http://www.cityofas-
burypark.com), but you can also contact the
people at Jersey Pride and head out for a visit
during the gay pride parade in June: [www.jer-
seypride.org](http://www.jer-
seypride.org).

A-F
RECORDS



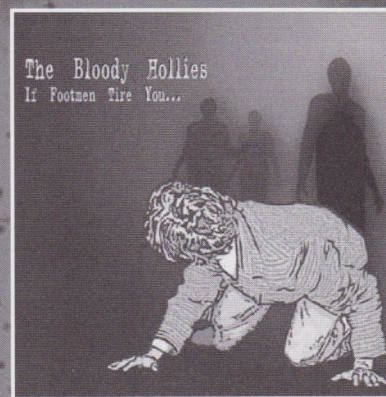
INQUISITION
"Revolution...
I Think It's Called
Inspiration"
AF 0044 CD

THREE.ONE.G →

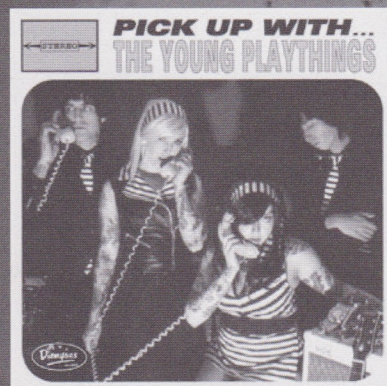


HEAD WOUND CITY
"Head Wound City"
THREE ONE G 47
CD EP/10"

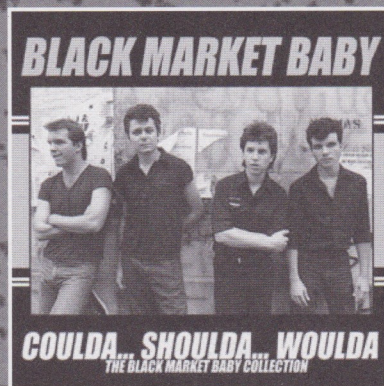
Alive records
NATURAL SOUND



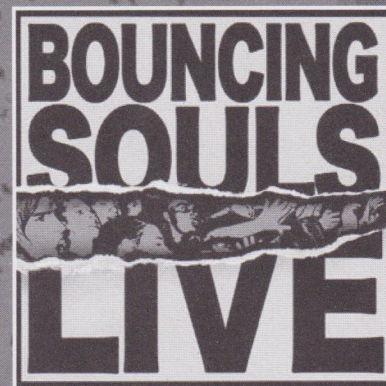
THE BLOODY HOLLIES
"If The Footmen
Tire You..."
ALIVE 0063 CD/LP



THE YOUNG PLAYTHINGS
"Pick Up With...
The Young Playthings"
ID 1233124 CD/LP



BLACK MARKET BABY
"Coulda... Shoulda...
Woulda: The Black Market
Baby Collection"
DSR 104 CD



BOUNCING SOULS
"Bouncing Souls
Live"
CAR 025 2xCD



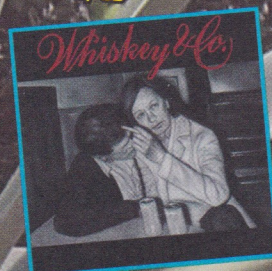
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JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 06

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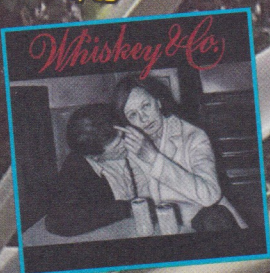
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ROE vs. WADE NOW: THE STATE OF CHOICE | SATURDAY



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WANTS A HOLLYWOOD ENDING.

